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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Initial report of States parties

Singapore*

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Singapore's Initial Report to the UN Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Introduction

1.1 Singapore is a young, multi-racial and multi-cultural nation with less than 35 years of history since its independence in August 1965. Out of a population of about 3.1 million (as at June 1997), 77.15% were Chinese, 14.11% were Malays, 7.40% were Indians and the remaining 1.34% were from the other ethnic groups. The ethnic composition of our population shapes the multi-faceted character of the family and social life in Singapore. For example, its people are governed by two major pieces of legislation when it comes to marriage and divorce. The civil law governs the non-Muslims whilst the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) governs the rights and personal laws of Muslims in Singapore.

1.2 The government recognises the need to address the issue of women's status and the position of women in Singapore. Article 12 of the Singapore Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law. For example, women were given the right to vote at the same time as men in 1948. Human rights including women's rights are protected within this legal framework. Any person who is of the view that his/her legal rights have been infringed can bring the matter before the courts. Singapore advocates an equal opportunity policy for both sexes in all sectors of the economy, based on a principle of meritocracy. This policy is incorporated in the planning and implementation of government policies and programmes. Singapore's efforts in this regard were recognised by the UNDP Human Development Report of 1997, where Singapore was described as one of the countries which had "succeeded in enhancing the basic human capabilities of both women and men".

1.3 It is the policy of the government to recognise the role women can play in the development of the nation. To this end, several measures have been introduced to support women. These include :

- Child care programmes for working mothers (Article 11);
- Legislative provisions to safeguard the interest of part-time workers (Article 11);
- Special health services for women and older women (Article 12);
- The provision of a comprehensive range of community-based services for the elderly and the disabled that will assist women, the principal care-givers in families (Articles 3 and 12); and
- Special tax incentives for married women (Article 13).

1.4 These measures are spelt out more fully in Part II under the respective Articles.

2 Reservations tendered by Singapore on the CEDAW

2.1 Singapore has tabled reservations to Articles 2, 9, 11, 16 and 29(2). These relate to the following areas :

Article 2 & Article 16

2.2 Articles 2 and 16 require States Parties to take all appropriate means including legislation to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against women. Whilst Singapore has to large extent complied with this, Article 12(3) and Article 152 of our Constitution require the respect of the freedom of minorities in the practice of their personal and religious laws. These provisions under our Constitution are necessary to maintain the delicate balance in a multi-cultural society. There are provisions under our Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) which may not be consistent with the CEDAW, for example, the right given to a Muslim man to marry up to 4 wives and not vice versa. We consider it necessary to maintain our reservations to Articles 2 and 16 of the CEDAW in view of the need to respect the right of Muslim citizens to practice their personal and religious laws.

Article 9

2.3 Article 9, paragraph 2, requires States Parties to grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children. Article 122(1) of our Constitution accords Singapore citizenship by descent to a child born outside of Singapore if his/her father is a Singaporean by birth or registration, provided the birth is registered within one year. A child born outside Singapore of a Singaporean mother and non-citizen father has to apply for Singapore citizenship by registration, which may be refused. A reservation is necessary to ensure that our immigration policy remains in line with our Asian tradition where husbands are the heads of households.

Article 11

2.4 Article 11, paragraph 1, requires States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment to ensure equality of men and women. However, given our small population and low total fertility rate (Singapore has been unable to achieve our replacement population level since 1975), we have a policy of safeguarding the welfare of women and their unborn children from certain hazardous occupations. This is in line with CEDAW's recommendation under Article 11 1(f) to safeguard the function of reproduction.

2.5 Article 11, paragraph 2, requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to prevent discrimination against women workers in regard to dismissal on grounds of marriage or pregnancy and to ensure maternity protection and benefits. Singapore's Employment Act stipulates the basic terms and conditions of employment, including maternity and maternity benefits. The Act excludes persons in managerial, executive and confidential positions, seamen and domestic workers from its coverage. The exclusion of these groups is not based on gender and is therefore not discriminatory against female workers. Whilst there is no legislation to specifically cover female workers outside the scope of the Employment Act, there is no necessity to specifically enact employment laws as the principle of equality is enshrined in the Singapore Constitution and is widely practised in the field of employment. An

employee who is aggrieved by unfair employment practices can seek the help of the Ministry of Manpower or seek redress through the civil court.

Article 29(2)

2.6 Article 29 (1) requires States Parties to submit for arbitration any dispute concerning the interpretation of the Convention which cannot be settled by negotiation. Singapore has entered a reservation to this article as is expressly permitted by Article 29 (2) of the Convention to maintain Singapore's right to its domestic policies.

3 Areas for Improvement

3.1 Singapore has carefully studied the provisions of the CEDAW in the context of our existing laws, values and practices. Our conclusion is that Singapore has, to a large extent, met the aims of the Convention. Despite this, more will be done in the years ahead and these include:

- Reinforcing the concept of shared responsibility that is promoted in the family life education programmes implemented island-wide.
- Continuing to encourage more female enrolment in male-dominated courses at the polytechnics and universities.
- Improving women's health and implementing new programmes, especially for older women.
- Periodically reviewing existing legislation to protect the rights of women and girls.
- Encouraging more women to assume leadership positions in government and non-government organisations, including being elected into public office.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The government is committed to the advancement of the status of women. It will continue to work closely with non-government organisations, including the women's groups,to promote women's welfare and status.

4.2 Singapore women have achieved much over the years and made great inroads in many sectors despite subtle prejudices that still exist whenever traditional views about women and the role of women are held. The most recent developments include the appointments of our first female divisional police commander (in Aug 99) and female permanent secretary in the Singapore Civil Service (in Oct 99). To enable women to achieve their fullest potential will require the continued efforts of men and women in every position of influence, including employers, community leaders and policy makers.

June 1999

INTRODUCTION

1 The Republic of Singapore acceded and signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN - CEDAW) on 5 October 1995. The Convention came into force for Singapore on 4 November 1995, i.e., one month upon Singapore's accession as provided in Article 27 of the Convention.

2 This report constitutes the initial report of Singapore as required under Article 18 of the UN - CEDAW. It covers the period 1995 to 1997 and up to 1998 in some instances.

3 The report is prepared in two parts as directed by the UN "Guidelines Regarding the Form and Content of Initial Reports of State Parties" dated 23 February 1996 and the UN "Preparation of the Initial Parts of State Party Reports (Core Documents) under the various International Human Rights Instruments" dated 24 February 1992.

4 Part I is the core document which gives information on the general situation of Singapore and its approach to the UN - CEDAW.

5 Part II examines the various articles of the convention and provides specific information on Singapore's position on each of these articles.

PART I

1 GENERAL FRAMEWORK

(a) Physical Environment

1.1 Singapore consists of one main island and some 60 small ones with a land area of 647.5 square kilometres (1997). It is principally a small city state and an equatorial country with relatively uniform temperature, abundant rainfall and high humidity. It is separated from Peninsular Malaysia by the Straits of Johor and from the Indonesian islands by the Straits of Singapore. Good integration of land use, infrastructure and transportation planning is emphasised to optimise limited land to meet the needs of different sectors of the community.

(b) Demography characteristics

1.2 Singapore is a small nation. It has no natural resources and imports virtually everything the population needs. Given these physical constraints, Singapore is dependent on its people to develop/create wealth and progress. The government is committed to the development of its citizenry to be willing to work and to constantly adapt to changing circumstances. These constraints and pre-requisites shape our approach to our policies for the country's development.

1.3 Singapore's population is made up of largely descendants of immigrants from the Malay Peninsular, China, the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka. The people still retain their traditional practices, customs and festivals whilst having an over-arching common Singaporean identity.

1.4 Out of a population of 3,103, 500 people in June 1997, 77.15 per cent were Chinese, 14.11 per cent were Malays, 7.43 per cent were Indians and the remaining 1.31 per cent came from other ethnic groups. This multi-ethnic composition of the population shapes every aspect of civil life in Singapore.

1.5 Singapore's 1995 General Household Survey showed that about 85.5 per cent of Singaporeans professed to have some religious faith or spiritual belief. Of the Singapore Residents aged 15 years and above, there were:

- 31.9 per cent Buddhists
- 21.9 per cent Taoists
- 15.0 per cent Muslims
- 12.9 per cent Christians
- 3.3 per cent Hindus

1.6 Of the Muslims, 86.3 per cent were Malays; 88.9 per cent Christians were Chinese and 99.3 per cent Hindus were Indians.

1.7 Of the Singapore Residents in 1997, 22.68 per cent (704,000) were aged below 15 years of age, 63.14 per cent (1,959,600) were aged 15 to 54 years, 9.72 per cent (301,700) were aged 55 to 69 years, and 4.45 per cent (138,200) were aged 70 years and above. The median age of the Singapore Resident was 32.6 years. This was an increase from 27.2 years in 1985. Women made up 49.75 per cent of the Singapore Residents or a ratio of 99.0 to 100 men (June 1997). The population density per square kilometre in 1997 was 5,768, an increase of 29.41 per cent from 1987.

1.8 The proportion of females as heads of households increased 19 per cent from 1990 to 1995 (i.e. from 110,568 to 131,542). However, the proportion of female heads of households who were divorced and widowed have remained about the same, at around 8.8 per cent to 9 per cent of the total number of households as shown in the Table 1.

TABLE 1 : FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS (WIDOWS AND DIVORCEES)

1990 & 1995

Year	Total No. of Heads of Households	No. Widowed (Female)	No. Divorced (Female)	Total No. of Widows & Female Divorcees
1990*	661,730	46,768 (7.07%)	11,471 (1.73%)	58,239 (8.8%)
1995#	773,722	50,836 (6.57%)	19,058 (2.46%)	69,894 (9.03%)

* Table 26 : Census Report, 1990.

Table 28: General Household Survey, 1995.

1.9 With rising standards of living, better health care and improved nutrition, maternal mortality rate has fallen from 0.05 per thousand live and still births in 1980 to 0.04 in 1997. Infant mortality rate also fell from 11.6 per thousand resident live births in 1980 to 3.6 in 1997. The UNICEF 1996 Report on "The Progress of Nations" (page 53) ranked Singapore third, behind Sweden and Finland in the under-five mortality rate.

1.10 The total fertility rate has stabilized at 1.6 births per woman since 1997 with the introduction of the New Population Policy by Government to encourage higher fertility and to reverse the late marriage and child bearing trends by the more educated men and women of Singapore. However, the rate is still below the replacement level of 2.1 in 1975.

1.11 Life expectancy has steadily improved from 72.1 years in 1980 to 77.1 years in 1997. Females live longer than males and have a life expectancy of 79.2 years as compared to 75.0 years for males. A longer life expectancy has economic and social implications for the society.

1.12 Singapore defines "aged" as those who are 65 years and above. This group is projected to increase from 7.0 per cent in 1997 to 8.23 per cent by the year 2010 and to 18.4 per cent by the year 2030. This trend will have implications for families and women which the government and the community are addressing. The proportion of older women aged 65 years and above has also increased from 2.60 per cent in 1980 to 3.84 per cent in 1997.

1.13 Singapore has four official languages, i.e. Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English. English is the language of administration.

1.14 The literacy[1] rate (number of literate persons for every hundred residents) for the Singapore Residents aged 15 years and above rose from 82.3 per cent in 1980 to 92.8 per cent in 1997. The literacy rate for females improved from 73.1 per cent in 1980 to 88.5 per cent in 1997 as compared to males from 91.4 per cent in 1980 to 96.6 per cent in 1997.

1.15 More Singaporeans are becoming multi-lingual and are literate in two or more languages. The learning of mother tongue is compulsory for students in schools.

(c) The Economy

1.16 Singapore's economic development strategy places emphasis both on the manufacturing and service sectors as areas of growth. To achieve its vision of a developed nation, Singapore has to operate and compete in the global marketplace.

1.17 Singapore is a free port and an open economy. Singapore was ranked 26th, out of 175 countries by the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) of 1997 which ranks each country according to its score on a composite index integrating per capita GNP, life expectancy, literacy and educational levels. In 1997, its per capita Gross National Product (GNP) at prevailing market prices was S$39,310. The economy benefited from strong regional growth and a favourable global electronics cycle, with

[1] Literacy is defined as a person's ability to read with understanding a newspaper in the language specified.

growth being led by the manufacturing, transport and communications sectors. The other key sectors also recorded good growth.

1.18 Standards of living have risen substantially for nearly everyone because incomes have risen faster than costs in general, including health, education and transport.

1.19 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the price changes over time of a fixed basket of goods and services commonly consumed by households. The rise in the CPI has been modest in the past decade, with an annual increase of 2.4 per cent during the period 1987 to 1997. Inflationary pressures remained low in 1996 and 1997 where the CPI rose by 1.4 per cent and 2.0 per cent, respectively.

1.20 External debt (such as to the Asian Development Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) declined from S$173.8 million in 1970 to S$4.7 million in 1994. Singapore has no external debts since 31 March 1996.

1.21 The annual average unemployment rate has remained low, averaging at 1.9 from 1995 to 1997 (seasonally adjusted). The annual average unemployment rates for males and females for 1997 were 1.9 and 1.7, respectively.

2. POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

(a) The Evolution of the Political System

2.1 After nearly 140 years of colonial rule (1819 - 1959), with the exception of the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945, Singapore was granted self-government in 1959. On 16 September 1963, Singapore became independent within the Federation of Malaysia. However, the merger was short-lived. Singapore became a fully independent and sovereign nation upon separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965. On 21 September 1965, Independent Singapore was admitted to the United Nations. On 22 December 1965, Singapore became a republic, with Mr Yusof bin Ishak as the first President of the Republic of Singapore elected by Parliament.

(b) The Framework of the Singapore Government

2.2 Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. The organs of state - the executive, the legislature and the judiciary - are provided for by a written constitution.

2.3 The Head of State is the President. The administration of the Government is vested in the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and the other Members of the Cabinet are appointed by the President from among its elected Members of Parliament. The Cabinet is collectively responsible to Parliament.

(c) The Executive

2.4 In January 1991, the Constitution of Singapore was amended to allow for the election of a President by the citizens of Singapore. The elected President holds office for a fixed term of six years. He is empowered to veto government budgets and appointments to public office. He can also examine the Government's exercise of its powers under the Internal Security Act and religious harmony laws, and in investigations into cases of corruption.

2.5 A Council of Presidential Advisors is appointed to advise and make recommendations to the President. The President must consult the Council before performing some of his functions, for instance, the appointment of key civil servants.

2.6 The first Presidential election was held on 28 August 1993.
Mr Ong Teng Cheong is the first President to be elected by the people of Singapore.

(d) Cabinet

2.7 The Cabinet is led by the Prime Minister, who is appointed by the President as the Member of Parliament who commands the confidence of the majority of the Members of Parliament. Ministers are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister and are selected from among the Members of Parliament. The Cabinet is responsible for all government policies and the day-to-day administration of the affairs of

the state. It is responsible collectively to Parliament and comprises the Prime Minister and ministers in charge of 15 Ministries.

(e) The Legislature

2.8 The Singapore legislature is made up of the President and Parliament.

(f) Parliament

2.9 Parliament is unicameral. It consists of Members from single-member constituencies, Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) and Nominated Member of Parliament (NMPs).

2.10 GRCs were created by a 1988 amendment to the Constitution to ensure representation of minority races. Candidates for election in a GRC contest in groups of four. All members of a group must either belong to a single political party or be independents. Each GRC must have at least one candidate belonging to a minority racial community.

2.11 Provision for NMPs was made in the Constitution in 1990 to lend wider representation of views in Parliament. The President may appoint up to 9 NMPs for a term of up to 2 years, on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament. As at 14 April 98, 2 out of the 9 NMPs were women.

2.12 The Constitution also provides for the election of Non-Constituency Members of Parliament (NCMPs). NCMPs are additional Members appointed to ensure the representation of a minimum of 4 Members from a political party or parties not forming the Government in Parliament.

(g) The Judiciary

2.13 Judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court and the Subordinate Courts. The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice, the Judges of Appeal and judges who

are appointed from time to time. There are special provisions in the constitution to safeguard the tenure of office and the independence of the judges of the Supreme Court.

3 SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 As a pro-family society, Singapore attaches great importance to the institution of the family. Many policies in Singapore are designed specifically with the family in mind and these policies do affect and also benefit women. Examples include family life education programmes (see pages 23-25 of the Report), child care centres subsidies and Student Care Centres Programmes (see pages 52-53) and the priority scheme for public housing to encourage extended families to reside in the same flats (see page 59).

3.2 Women made up 49.75 per cent of the population of Singapore (June 1997). Women in Singapore are not perceived as a minority or disadvantaged group in Singapore. Women are given equal access to education, training, employment opportunities and health care services. They enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities as men in all sectors based on the principle of meritocracy. This policy is incorporated in the planning and implementation of policies and programmes across government ministries.

3.3 The low representation of women in politics [and other male-dominated occupations] is due mainly to stereotyped attitudes, cultural practices and values among woman members rather than to discriminatory laws or the lack of opportunities. Singapore recognises the existence of such long-standing societal attitudes and cultural practices which pose obstacles to a more active and higher participation rate of women in some fields. Singapore is seeking an improvement in the situation through long-term public education and awareness programmes. Details on these programmes can be found in pages 23- 25 of the Report.

3.4 The Ministry of Community Development is the focal point for women's matters and liaises closely with all the government ministries, women's organisations, other agencies and non-governmental bodies on issues affecting women. There are

avenues for feedback on issues affecting women. These include the Committee on the Family (COF) reporting to the Minister for Community Development. COF is a national advisory body which looks into and makes recommendations to the government on issues and policies affecting the family, including women. COF is chaired by a member of the public appointed by the Minister and includes representative officials from various Ministries, NGOs, including Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (the umbrella body for women's organisations in Singapore), and prominent individuals of the community with interest and expertise in the family.

3.5 Singapore, together with her ASEAN neighbours, signed the "Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region" on 5 July 1988 which primarily aims to promote the status of women and enable them to achieve their fullest potential. The implementation of the Declaration is monitored by the ASEAN Sub-Committee on Women.

3.6 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (hereafter referred to as the Convention) came into force for Singapore on 4 November 1995. The principles to promote the equality for women with men had been in place prior to Singapore's accession to the Convention. These provisions can be found in the Constitution of Singapore and other relevant legislation.

4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Singapore was a former British colony. English statutes which were enacted prior to 1826 were received into Singapore under the Second Charter of Justice. The applicable English law and principles in the major areas of commerce were also received into Singapore under Section 5 of the Civil Law Act. This provision was repealed in 1993 with the enactment of the Application of English Law Act, Cap 7A, which states expressly which English statutes are received into Singapore.[2]

[2] For a historical study of Singapore law, see The Development of Singapore Law by Andrew Phang (Butterworths, 1990); The Applicable Law in Singapore and Malaysia by Rutter (1989); The Sources and Literature of Singapore Law (Malayan Law Review Legal Essays, ed. Bartholomew, 1975).

4.2 Singapore's legal system is largely founded upon the British legal system which has since been modified and adapted to suit the nation's needs and circumstances. It is within this legal framework whereby human rights are protected. Any persons who are of the view that their legal rights have been infringed upon can bring an action in the local courts which will then adjudicate upon the issue according to the applicable law in Singapore.

4.3 The foundation for the principle of equality for women is entrenched in Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore which states that "all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law". For example, the right to vote was given to men and women at the same time in 1948.

4.4 In Singapore, there are two types of governing laws related to marriage and divorce. One is the civil law, i.e. the Women's Charter, and the other is the Muslim Law, or the Syariah Law.

4.5 The Women's Charter, enacted in 1961, is a landmark piece of legislation. It provides the legal basis for equality between husband and wife. It lifts the barriers towards the attainment of equal partnership between husband and wife. It safeguards women's rights in matters relating to marriage and upon divorce such as matrimonial assets, maintenance and custody of children. It also provides protection for family members from domestic violence and women and girls from sexual offences committed against them. Among its wide range of provisions, the Charter:

a) outlaws polygamy;
b) gives equal rights and responsibilities to both husband and wife in the management of children and the home;
c) entitles the wife to a share of the matrimonial property even though she may not have contributed directly to it financially;
d) makes it obligatory for the husband to maintain his wife and children during marriage and upon divorce;
e) protects the wife and children from a violent husband to the extent of removing him from the matrimonial home.

4.6 Changes have been made to the Women's Charter over the years to respond to new expectations and issues affecting women. For example, in 1980, the law on divorce in the Women's Charter was based on the "matrimonial offence" principle. This was changed to divorce by mutual consent, or the "irretrievable breakdown" principle.

4.7 In August 1996, the Women's Charter was amended to cover four key areas:

a) Protection of the family from domestic violence;

b) Division of matrimonial assets;

c) Enforcement of maintenance orders;

d) Legality of marriages.

4.8 The new amendments which came into force on 1 May 1997 accorded greater protection to family members against domestic violence. It also accorded greater protection to women and children in a divorce and recognises the home-making role of either spouse in the division of matrimonial assets. Details of these amendments which promote the principle of equality for women are expanded in the response to Part II of this Report, particularly to Article 24 of the Convention.

4.9 As a responsible member of the international community, Singapore takes a serious view of its international obligations to treaties such as the Convention. Apart from this Convention, Singapore is also a signatory to various other international human rights instruments, some of which are specific to women (See list at Annex 1). Singapore is also a member of the Association of South-East Asia Nations (ASEAN) wherein women's issues attract major concern and discussions.[3]

4.10 Treaties and Conventions do not automatically become part of the laws of Singapore unless they are specifically incorporated into the legal system. As such, an aggrieved party cannot invoke the provisions of the Convention in the law courts in Singapore.

[3] Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region, Bangkok, 5 July 1988; The Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific, Jakarta, 14 June 1994, in relation to the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development.

4.11 Although there is no specific gender equality and anti-gender discrimination legislation in Singapore, the principle of equality of all persons before the law is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore.[4] This provision, by virtue of its generality, necessarily encompasses the non-discrimination of women.

5 INSTITUTIONS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN SINGAPORE

5.1 There are no special institutions or national machinery with the specific responsibility for overseeing the implementation of human rights, in particular, women's rights. However, the Ministry of Community Development (MCD) is the national focal point for the advancement of the status of women.

5.2 As the umbrella body of women's organisations recognised by government, the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) is well placed to provide leadership and direction for all women's bodies and works together with the government to promote the effective participation of women in all fields.

5.3 Women's issues are taken up by the MCD with the various Ministries which in the exercise of their functions are sensitive to and do take into account issues relating to women and the family. In that sense, all the Ministries are jointly responsible together with MCD for eliminating discrimination of women in Singapore. Policies and issues affecting women and their families are monitored by the Committee on the Family.

5.4 There are indications that stereotyped attitudes and values upheld by both men and women which obstruct women from achieving their fullest potential are beginning to change in Singapore. For example, in a 1996 survey on 300 men and women of all races aged between 20 and 50 years and from varied occupational categories[5], 6 out of 10 men were of the view that women should strive for equality. The men also felt that women, especially the better educated ones, should contribute more and participate in nation-building and community development efforts. This augurs well for

[4] See Article 12 (1) of the Constitution. Article 12 (2) of the Constitution expressly provides for non- discrimination in certain specific areas of public and private life on grounds of religion, race, descent or place or birth; However, there is no constitutional provision specific to non-discrimination of women.

women's increased participation in the political, economic and social spheres in Singapore.

5.5 The Singapore Government is committed to and will continue to take steps to promote and enhance the role and status of women in Singapore.

[5] Conducted in May 1996 by the Kreta Ayer Citizens' Consultative Committee, a grassroots organisation.

PART II

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In accordance with the Guidelines of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women adopted at its 15th Session in January/February 1996, Part II of this Report outlines Singapore's progress with regard to the implementation of 11 out of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in Chapter III of the Platform for Action adopted at the 4th UN World Conference on Women at Beijing in September 1995. The fifth area of concern, on *the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on Women, including those living under foreign occupation*, does not apply for Singapore.

1.2 Singapore has tendered reservations with respect to five articles of the Convention. These relate mainly to the following areas:

a) the protection of the rights of minorities, which is important in our multi-cultural society;
b) our policies on immigration and citizenship in view of our limited size and resources;
c) some of our policies which may have restrictions or conditions on the employment of women in certain areas for their own protection or for the protection of their unborn children; and
d) some of our labour laws do not apply to employees holding managerial, executive and confidential positions as well as domestic workers and seamen.

2 ARTICLE 1 - DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATION

2.1 The Constitution of Singapore is the supreme law in Singapore and any law enacted by the Legislature which is inconsistent with the Constitution is void.[6] The Constitution specifically provides that "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law."[7] In Singapore, the right to equality applies to all women,

[6] See Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore.
[7] See Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore.

irrespective of their marital status and nationality so long as they are women resident within Singapore.

2.2 There are no specific provisions by which the law courts may impose penalties on persons or legal persons guilty of discriminating against women. Any redress will be dependent on the applicable law in that particular sphere. In addition, any person aggrieved by any legal provision may also apply to the courts to seek a judicial review of that particular legislation on the grounds that it is ultra vires of Article 12 of the Constitution. This will then be subject to adjudication by the courts.

3 ARTICLE 2 - THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

3.1 Article 12 of the Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law even though the principle of equality of man and woman is not specifically provided for in any written law. The Constitution also makes provision for freedom of speech, assembly and association, freedom of religion for all[8], though there is no specific legislature or measure with enforcement mechanisms prohibiting all discrimination against women.

3.2 However, should any person be of the view that his or her rights have been infringed, he or she is entitled to bring the matter before the courts. For this, the Legal Aid Bureau, which is administered by the State, provides legal aid to both males and females who are not able to employ the services of lawyers to pursue their rights as set out in the laws of Singapore. The Legal Aid Bureau, in particular, assists women in matrimonial disputes, e.g., divorce, maintenance claims etc. The Law Society of Singapore, which comprises mainly practising advocates and solicitors, also provides free legal advice through the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) in criminal cases. In addition, organisations like the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers. also run schemes and legal clinics providing free legal advice. Events aimed at better acquainting members of the public of their legal rights and remedies are also held. For example, the Law Society of Singapore organises law awareness campaigns bi-annually for the public. Other examples of activities carried out by

[8] See Article 14 and 15 of the Constitution.

the Law Society and other non-governmental organisations to promote public awareness of the law and special services that also benefit women on legal matters are mentioned in the responses under Article 15 of the Report.

3.3 In the field of criminal law, all penal provisions apply equally to both males and females[9]. However, certain penal sentencing provisions are more advantageous towards women. Under Section 231 of the Criminal Procedure Code, no sentence of caning may be passed upon women as compared to the provisions for men[10]. Section 214 of the Criminal Procedure Code also provides that when a woman convicted of an offence which is punishable by death is found to be pregnant, a sentence of life imprisonment is to be passed on her instead.

3.4 Some aspects of Muslim law may contravene the provisions of the Convention,e.g. the right of marriage. These are consistent with the practice of other Muslim states which Singapore notes have also found it necessary to enter reservations affecting the operation of the Islamic Law.

3.5 It is in this regard that Singapore has entered a reservation to Article 2 of the Convention. Singapore, as a multi-racial and multi-religious nation, needs to respect the freedom of minorities in the practice of their personal and religious laws as guaranteed under the Constitution[11].

4 ARTICLE 3 - BASIC RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

4.1 The government's role is to provide an enabling environment for women to achieve their potential in the social, economic and political life of the society, based on a principle of meritocracy. The government together with the support of the community has implemented a wide range of schemes, services and programmes to encourage and support working women to ensure their development and advancement in society. Examples are

[9] Exceptions,e.g. rape which as defined in Section 375 of the Penal Code,and gross indecency under Section 377A of the Penal Code, both of which can only be committed by a man and these are not discrimination against women within the meaning of the Convention.
[10] Males sentenced to death or males above the age of 50 years are not punishable with caning.
[11] See Article 12(3) and Article 152 of the Constitution.

special schemes for working mothers, special health services for women, legislative provisions to protect the rights of women, tax incentives and the provision of a comprehensive range of community-based services for the elderly, the disabled and the children to assist women who tend to be the principal carers in families.

4.2 Certain aspects of Singapore's immigration and citizenship legislation and practice do not confer equality of treatment of both sexes [referred to in greater detail under the respective Articles]. Singapore views such differential measures necessary in view of its small geographical size and high population density. This issue is hence addressed in the second reservation lodged by Singapore pertaining to the immigration and citizenship issues [discussed under the respective Articles].

5 ARTICLE 4 - ADOPTION OF SPECIAL MEASURES

5.1 No such special measures exist currently. In view of Singapore's social context, such measures are considered unnecessary. Women are not perceived as a disadvantaged or marginalised group in society.

5.2 Special measures aimed at protecting maternity do, however, exist under the Employment Act and Employment Regulations. As provided under Article 4(2) of the Convention, these are, however, specific in nature and are not discriminatory to women.

6 ARTICLE 5 - SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING AND PREJUDICE

Media and advertisements

6.1 The Singapore government makes known its adherence to traditional Asian values,especially with regard to the importance of the family.

6.2 There is equal portrayal of women in leadership roles in the media. The many examples of successful women, very often made well-known by the media, attest to this. As such, the success of women including woman MPs and NMPs such as Ms. Claire

Chiang, banker Elizabeth Sam, hotelier Jennie Chua, head of business development at Jardine Fleming International Securities, Singapore, Mrs.Lim Hwee Hua, managing partner of Ernst and Young of Singapore, Mrs Fang Ai Lian and many others are often highlighted. Women are encouraged to join and succeed in the workforce and the fact of Singapore women's success in diverse fields is reflective of the reality in society. Professor Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's former Permanent Representative to the UN in New York (from 1989 to 1991) and Ambassador of the Singapore Embassy in Washington from 1996 to-date, was honoured as the first-ever woman ambassador to Washington from an Asian country to become a role model on the international stage upon being awarded,on 3 May 1998, the first International Woman of the Year Award by the Organisation of Chinese American Women, America's oldest national women's organisation devoted to the issues and concerns of Asian American Women.

6.3 Women play a significant role in the media in Singapore. Prominent newscasters from the Television Corporation of Singapore are women. There are also many women in senior editorial positions in the local press such as the Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao and Berita Harian. Their columns and articles on women issues and their strong representation in the media industry is critical to maintaining a high social position of women in Singapore.

6.4 In Singapore, censorship plays a role in creating a balance between maintaining a morally wholesome society and becoming an economically dynamic, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant nation. It helps to protect the young against undesirable influences and safeguards central values such as the sanctity of marriage, the importance of the family, respect for one's elders, filial piety, moral integrity, and respect for and tolerance towards different racial and religious groups. Pornographic materials are banned in Singapore. The ban serves to inhibit the industry on promoting the exploitation and further stereotyping of women. The Board of Film Censors maintains a strict policy with regards to this as well as films that promote excessive violence. Based on the censorship criteria, films which are not allowed in Singapore include:

- films that depict explicit or perverted sex;
- nude scenes that are exploitative or obscene;

- films that encourage drug abuse; and
- films that denigrate any particular religion or race.

6.5 A Censorship Review Committee (CRC), was appointed in May 1991 to review and recommend changes to the censorship policy and practices. Forty-six recommendations were put up by the CRC based on the results of their survey. Many of these recommendations also touch on areas pertaining to women's rights, e g. educational sex manuals, classification of films and publications, computer software showing pornography and etc. The Report of the Committee was released to the public in 1992. All the key recommendations by the CRC have been fully implemented.

6.6 Under the censorship laws, the major provisions of the Undesirable Publications Act (UPA) Act[12] are:

a) the power to prohibit importation, sale or circulation of publications under Section 5;
b) the power to examine packages and articles coming into Singapore under Sections 8 and 15 respectively; and
c) the power of search and seizure under Sections 10 and 13.

6.7 The penalties for offences under the UPA include:-

a) Section 6(1) - the penalty for importing, publishing, selling, offering for sale, supplying, offering to supply, exhibiting, distributing or reproducing any prohibited publication is a fine of up to S$10,000 and/or imprisonment of up to 3 years for first offenders, and subsequent offenders face imprisonment of up to 4 years;
b) Section 6(2) - penalty for being in possession of prohibited publication without any reasonable excuse is a fine of up to S$2,000 and/or imprisonment of up to 1 year for a first offender, and for subsequent offenders, imprisonment of up to 2 years;

[12] See details in the Undesirable Publications Act, Cap 338, 1998 Revised Edition.

c) Section 11 - penalty for the offences relating to obscene, but not prohibited, publications is a fine of up to S$10,000 and/or imprisonment of up to 2 years; and

d) Section 12 - penalty for the offences relating to objectionable, but not prohibited, publications is a fine of up to S$ 5,000 and/or imprisonment of up to 1 year.

6.8 The area where sex role stereotyping is likely to exist is in the advertising industry. The Ministry of Information and the Arts does not have jurisdiction over the advertising industry but intervenes in cases where advertisements infringe upon the censorship criteria and where moral standards are threatened.

6.9 The Advertising Standards of Singapore (ASAS), a non-profit and independent organisation under the umbrella of the Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE)[13], regulates the contents of advertisements in print and television. It comprises 15 organisations, including the Ministries of Health, Environment and the Television Corporation of Singapore. Though there is no specific code on sex-role stereotyping in its Code of Advertising Practice, the Code provides that "no advertisement should, by claim or implication unfairly discriminate against, cast in a poor light or denigrate any race, religion or sex". Also, under its rule on Discriminating Employment Advertisements, "Advertisements offering employment should not, by claim or implication, discriminate on racial, religious or sexual grounds unless any requirement as to race, religion and/or sex is inherently justified by the necessities of the job concerned"[14].

Sexual Crimes Against Women

6.10 Stiff penal penalties are imposed on any person found guilty of rape and incest[15]. A person convicted of rape can generally expect to be sentenced to a period of 10 years imprisonment in addition to at least 6 strokes of the cane[16].

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[13] CASE is the only consumer organisation in Singapore set up since August 1971 to inform, educate and protect consumers. It is a non-profit organisation which is also financed by government grants.

[14] See report in the New Paper dated 1 July 1996 on "Watchdog says no to fat wife AD".

[15] See Sections 376 and 377 of the Penal Code. For rape, punishable for up to 20 years and liable to fine and caning; for aggravated rape as defined in Section 376(2), punishable with minimum imprisonment of 8 years, up to maximum of 20 years and minimum 12 strokes of the cane.

6.11 Marital violence is firmly dealt with by the Government. Administrative measures and legislation have been introduced to protect and assist women exposed to marital violence. Details on these provisions and programmes to address this issue and support women can be found in the responses under Article 24, in pages 75 - 78 of the Report.

6.12 Stiff sentences are also imposed on anyone found guilty of molesting a woman. The actual severity of the sentencing varies according to the factual context[17]. Where private parts of the victim are involved, caning is likely to be imposed[18]. In addition, a person intending to insult the modesty of any women by any word, sound or gesture can also be punished with imprisonment for up to 1 year or with a fine.[19]

6.13 The number of prosecuted cases of rape and outraging of modesty was 360 in 1995, 333 in 1996 and 301 in 1997. Of these prosecuted cases, 260, 225 and 174 were convicted in 1995, 1996 and 1997, respectively. The sentences meted out ranged from fines of S$500 to S$10,000 and imprisonment of 1 day to 20 years and 24 strokes of the cane.

6.14 Arising from a proposal for standardising and enhancing police procedures in rape management to the Police in May 1992 by the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), a Rape Management Committee was set up under the Ministry of Home Affairs with representatives from the SCWO. The Rape Management Committee was subsequently re-named as the Women and Family Violence Committee (WFVC) in September 1994. Its terms of reference include:-

a) to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-Ministry Work Group on Spousal Violence[20];
b) to look into the training of police officers in handling spousal and other family violence;
c) to serve as an avenue for external agencies to propose new strategies to deal with the problem of family violence.

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[16] See Court of Appeal in Chia Kim Heng Frederick v PP [1992] 1 SLR 361.
[17] See Sections 354 and 354A of the Penal Code. Molest is punishable with up to 2 years imprisonment or fine or caning; aggravated molest is punishable with mandatory minimum imprisonment term of 2 or 3 years, depending on which of the listed circumstances the offence falls under [up to a maximum of 10 years] and caning.
[18] See case of Chandresh Patel v PP Magistrate's Appeal No. 357 of 1993.
[19] See Section 509 of the Penal Code.

6.15 With the launch of the Rape Investigation Squad on 1 October 1997, investigations of such nature were centralised under the Criminal Investigation Department instead of the Police Land Divisions. The Squad comprises a 15-member team of 10 male and 5 female police officers who investigate cases of rape, incest, carnal connection and unnatural offences. These officers are specially identified and undergo an induction programme as part of their training,involving psychologists and legal officers from the Attorney-General Chambers. Victims are provided with counselling and emotional support to reduce their trauma. A trained female officer will see to the needs of a female victim throughout the investigation process.

Family Life Education

6.16 Family life education in Singapore has always stressed on both women and men sharing a common role in raising their children,with both parents giving priority to the interests of their children at all times. Family life education is promoted both in the school curriculum and in the media and aimed at parents and children gaining proper understanding of equality of the sexes within the family. It recognises the involvement of both parents in the raising of children as an important measure for alleviating the burden on women of combining domestic duties and employment.

6.17 In the classroom, the syllabi on family life education are implemented during civics and moral education classes through the use of print materials such as textbooks and activity books and audio-visual materials such as picture cards, audio and video tapes. Activities carried out are pupil-centred so as to make the lessons more interesting and effective.

6.18 The values are also transmitted through art and craft lessons in the form of drawings and posters. These are aimed at strengthening family relationships. More significantly, the status of the female elder is also enhanced, thus upholding the importance of the maternal role in our society.

[20] See details of the Inter-Ministry Work Group on Spousal Violence reported under Article 24.

6.19 Strengthening families and their relationships to build a strong and resilient society is given strong emphasis by government. The Ministry of Community Development (MCD), as the co-ordinator of such efforts, was re-structured in 1995 with the formation of a new Division (Family Development Division) to be more proactive in spearheading and co-ordinating policies and programmes to strengthen families and to adopt a family approach in solving problems.

6.20 To promote Family Life and Parent Education in Singapore, the Ministry of Community Development has been organising the National Family Week as an annual event since 1985. The event aims to get families to celebrate family life and the family values that are cherished and to encourage people to build and nurture strong and healthy families. Since 1979, a Senior Citizens Week has also been organised on an annual basis to promote a positive attitude towards ageing and the aged. These events have become part of our calendar of national events.

6.21 Activities organised at these annual events e.g. seminars and talks on parenting involving the participation of the community, private sector, government ministries and the voluntary welfare organisations, benefit women and their families.

6.22 The very important role of women in our society is acknowledged by the Singapore government. What is often overlooked by many is that the role of the home-maker cannot be left to women only. To counter this, both boys and girls in schools are given the opportunity to study both Home Economics (traditionally a subject for girls) and technical subjects (traditionally for boys). With these varied skills both males and females can be competitive in fitting into a modern society and share home-making responsibilities at home.

6.23 On sex education: it is not taught formally in schools as a subject on its own. The Ministry of Education prefers to adopt a cross-curricular approach to enable schools to teach the various aspects of this topic according to the maturity of the pupils. In the primary schools, it is taught in Health Education classes and in the secondary schools, it is taught in Science, Civics and Moral Education classes.

6.24 At the upper primary levels (Primary 4 to Primary 6), aspects of sex education taught through the Health Education classes are meant to prepare pupils for puberty and early adolescence. At the lower secondary levels, sex education is given greater breadth of treatment through the topic "Sexual Reproduction in Human Beings" in the Science syllabus where pupils acquire the knowledge and understanding of the human reproductive systems, fertilisation and birth control. The personal and social consequences of sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and pre-marital sex are also discussed. At the upper secondary levels, topics on sex education such as "Fertilisation to birth", "Family planning" and "Sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS" are incorporated into the biological sciences.

6.25 Responsible behaviour and moral values are further reinforced and developed in Civics and Moral Education classes. In the topic on boy-girl relationship, pupils are taught on coming to terms with their own sexuality, developing healthy relationships with members of the opposite sex and taking responsibility for one's own behaviour and actions.

7 ARTICLE 6 - OFFENCES RELATED TO TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND PROSTITUTION

7.1 Singapore is a party to the following international Conventions which are related to the issue of prostitution:-

a) the International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children [1921] and 1947 Protocol;

b) the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic of Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the Final Protocol [1950];

c) the International Agreement for the Suppression of "White Slave Traffic" [1910] and the 1949 Protocol; and

d) the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices similar to Slavery [1956].

7.2 Many, if not all,of the international Conventions to which we are a party were those which the UK had acceded to and which were extended to Singapore prior to our independence.

7.3 Sections 140 to 179 of the Women's Charter deal with offences of this nature. It is an offence for any person to solicit or loiter in public for the purpose of prostitution[21]. Offences relating to prostitution, such as the procurement of a woman or girl for immoral purposes, are provided for and are punishable with imprisonment of up to 5 years and liable to a fine of up to S$10,000. Any offender who is convicted for a second and subsequent offence will be liable to caning as well[22]. It is also an offence to live on the earnings of another person's prostitution[23], and to keep, manage or assist in the management of a place of assignation or brothel[24]. Trafficking in women or girls, whether or not it is for the purpose of prostitution, is an offence which is punishable with imprisonment of up to 5 years and liable to a fine of up to S$10,000.[25]

7.4 Officers from Anti-Vice Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department are responsible for the enforcement of these provisions and the suppression of vice activities. The table below shows the number of persons charged and convicted in court for offences relating to anti-vice activities for the period 1995 to December 1997:

Year	No. of persons charged and convicted
1995	109
1996	118
1997	79

7.5 The Act specifically provides for trials for such offences or for offences of rape or outrage of modesty to be heard in camera[26]. In protecting the identity of such

[21] See Section 19 of the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act.
[22] See Section 140 of the Women's Charter.
[23] See Section 146 of the Women's Charter.
[24] See Sections 147 and 148 of the Women's Charter.
[25] See Section 141 of the Women's Charter.
[26] See Section 153 of the Women's Charter.

witnesses, the law aims to lessen the trauma experienced by the victim. This is to indirectly encourage witnesses to testify and ensure the thorough prosecution of such offenders[27].

7.6 In addition to penal sanctions, the Act also provides for the determination of tenancy of places of assignation or brothels and for the demolition of structural contrivances for facilitating the running of a place of assignation or of a brothel (Sections 150 and 151 of the Women's Charter).

7.7 The Children and Young Persons Act, Chapter 38 also contains provisions making the following acts unlawful :

a) contribution to delinquency of child or young person ;
b) sexual exploitation of child or young persons; and
c) trafficking in children.

Penal sanctions are imposed on persons convicted of involvement in such activities[28]. The Act also provides powers to certain categories of persons to detain such children and young persons in a place of safety[29].

7.8 Apart from the provisions in the Women's Charter and the Children and Young Persons Act, there are a number of provisions in the Penal Code [Sections 366 to 373A] which make:

a) kidnapping or abducting a woman to compel her to marriage, illicit intercourse or prostitution punishable with imprisonment up to 10 years and liable to fine or to caning;
b) kidnapping or abducting a person in order to subject the person to grievous hurt, slavery or unnatural lust punishable with the same penalties as (a) above;
c) buying or disposing of any persons as a slave punishable with imprisonment extending to 7 years and liable to a fine;

[27] The Court has imposed sentences of imprisonment for offences under the Women's Charter – see Mallal's Digest 1990-1993 on results of appeal.
[28] See Sections 5,6, 12 & 13 of the Children and Young Persons Act, Cap 38.
[29] See Section 8 of the Children and Young Persons Act, Cap 38.

d) habitual dealing in slaves punishable with life imprisonment or imprisonment for up to 10 years and liable to a fine;

e) selling and buying of minors for purposes of prostitution punishable with imprisonment up to 10 years and liable to a fine; and

f) importing with intent to sell in Singapore any women for the purpose of prostitution or buying or selling any woman for the purpose of prostitution similarly punishable as in (e) above.

7.9 These penal provisions in the Penal Code illustrate that as early as 1871, when they were first enacted, there was already recognition that special protection be given to certain persons,i.e. women and minors,to protect them from being subjected to exploitation to slavery and prostitution. Provisions also exist for more serious offences like rape, aggravated molestation and unnatural offence. There is also a special provision under Section 498 of the Penal Code for an offence of enticing or taking away a married woman with a criminal intent that she may have illicit intercourse. Many of these provisions are rarely enforced. However, the lack of enforcement does not suggest that these provisions are obsolete. Their present retention in the Penal Code provides the additional protection to women and minors against potential offenders.

7.10 Amendments were made to the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) to provide for live video or television link in the taking of evidence from certain witnesses involved in sexual offences (Section 364A of the CPC Cap. 68 with effect from 2 January 1996). There was also a similar amendment to the Evidence Act which took effect from 8 March 1996. Section 62A of the Evidence Act provides likewise for the taking of evidence from such witnesses in civil proceedings. Further details on these amendments are reported under Article 24 of the Convention.

8 ARTICLE 7 - WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO VOTE IN ALL ELECTIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE FORMULATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY AND IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS.

8.1 Singapore's achievements in life expectancy at birth, literacy rate and income share has been ranked 27th out of 146 countries in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the Human Development Report 1997. The Report singled out Singapore as

one of the top eight developing countries which had done quite well in the GDI ranking. Singapore was described as one of the countries which had "succeeded in enhancing the basic human capabilities of both women and men".

Politics

8.2 There are no obstacles or impediment to women voting in our system. There is legislation supporting their right to vote, which was given to women and men at the same time in 1948. The qualifications to vote at the Presidential Elections or the Parliamentary Elections are applicable to both women and men. This is in accordance with Section 5(1) of the Parliamentary Elections Act which is also applicable to Presidential Elections.

8.3 The qualifications of a candidate, to be elected at the Presidential Elections or the Parliamentary Elections, are applicable to both women and men. This is in accordance with Articles 19, 44 and 45 of the Singapore Constitution.

8.4 Females are equally eligible for election to public bodies[30]. There are no restrictions on the basis of gender. As at 14 April 1998, 4 out of the 84 elected Members of Parliament are women and 2 of the 9 Nominated Members of Parliament are women. 1 of the 3 Senior Ministers of State is a woman.

8.5 Women's position in the community in Singapore was boosted by the re-entry of women in politics in 1984. In July 1989, the launching of the Women's Wing in the People's Action Party, the ruling political party, marked a significant milestone in the involvement of women in political, community and public service.

8.6 In an opinion poll carried out by the National University of Singapore and the Gallup Organisation in August 1996 to gauge the opinions of Singaporeans on the status of men and women and their confidence in the future, 59 per cent of the 663 persons polled held the view that it would not make a difference if more women held political office. An

[30] See Article 44(2) of the Constitution on qualifications for membership of Parliament, Section 19 (2) on qualifications for office of President and Section 2 of the Interpretation Act where all references to masculine gender includes females unless it is inconsistent with the context or otherwise expressly stated. Hence all written law which uses the phrase "he" shall include female unless:

a) there is something in the subject or context which is inconsistent with such construction; or
b) it is otherwise expressly provided for.

overwhelming 82 per cent believed that their way of life was better than their parents. Another 61 per cent were optimistic and believed that their children would be better off than they were.

Formulation of government policy

8.7 Similarly, there are no restrictions on basis of gender on participation in formulation and implementation of government policy. Gender composition of staffing of government institutions provides a measure of the influence of women in public affairs. It also reflects the absence of social prejudice against women's participation in public life. The Singapore Civil Service, a major employer of women, illustrates the gender composition of staffing in favour of women. In 1997, more than half [59.5 per cent] of the Super scale and Division I officers were women. A woman High Court judge was appointed for the first time in May 1994. As at December 1997, 30 out of the 68 judges for the Subordinate Courts and 2 out of the 21 judges for the High Court were women.

Restrictions under Islamic Law

8.8 Under Islamic Law, women are not appointed to certain posts. The Administration of the Muslim Law Act (AMLA) states that "The President of Singapore may appoint either by name or office any male Muslim of good character and position and of suitable attainments to be the Registrar of Muslim Marriages". Section 91 (1) of the Act also states that "Subject to Section 146, the President of Singapore may appoint suitable male Muslims of good character and position and of suitable attainments to be the Kadis and Naib Kadis".

Participation in non-governmental organisations

8.9 The People's Association (PA) is a statutory board that helps to build a cohesive, dynamic and cultured nation through mass participation in educational, social, cultural, sports, recreational and other community activities. It has a network of 40 community clubs, 80 community centres and 462 Residents' Committee centres (as at 31 December 1997) for residents to participate in a wide range of community programmes and activities in Singapore.

8.10 The proportion of women's participation in the management of the various grassroots committees under the People's Association has increased over the years from 18.7 per cent in December 1991 to 23.5 per cent in December 1997 as shown in the following table:

TABLE 2: FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATE IN GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS 1991 & 1997

Grassroots Committees	Total Membership		Female Membership	
	Dec 1991	Dec 1997	Dec 1991	Dec 1997
Citizens Consultative Committee	2,192	2,687	106 (4.8%)	212 (7.9%)
Community Centre/Club Management Committees	2,508	2,770	274 (10.9%)	395 (14.3%)
Residents Committee (Executive members)	7,916	11,055	1,548 (19.6%)	2,742 (24.8%)
Area Sub-Committees	366	658	22 (6.0%)	73 (11.0%)
Youth Executive Committees	1,418	1,557	584 (41.2%)	635 (40.8%)
Senior Citizens' Executive Committees	1,316	3,637	401 (30.5%)	1,222 (33.6%)
Total	15,716	22,446	2,935 (18.7%)	5,279 (23.5%)

8.11 The various grassroots committees organise social, cultural, educational, sports, recreational and other wholesome activities for their members and the general public.

8.12 Women's Sub-Committees (WSCs) were formed in 1967 to organise and promote wholesome activities for women. The status of WSCs was elevated to Women's Executive Committees (WECs) in October 1988. The PA has now 97 WECs. The number of committee members increased steadily from 106 in 1967 to 1,467 in December 1997 with a total ordinary membership of 22,426.

8.13 The People's Association Women's Executive Committee Co-ordinating Council was established on 12 March 1995. The Council plans, organises and co-ordinates activities for the WECs and provides leadership and management training for WEC members. The Council also serves as a 'bridge' between the Government and the people. It explains government policies and serves as a channel of feedback between the people and the Government. The Council comprises the Chairpersons of all the WECs and 13 of them have been appointed as members of the Executive Committee of the Council.

8.14 The WECs organise a wide range of activities and services to meet the varied needs and interests of women in Singapore. They include continuing education courses, social educational programmes, cultural activities, sports events, overseas and local tours, visits to welfare homes, tuition for students, talks and forums for women, fund-raising projects for charities, legal counselling for women, activities promoting family values and workshops to encourage non-working women to return to the workforce. The WECs provide an avenue for women to contribute to community services and participate in nation-building. Besides those serving on the WECs, many women have also assumed leadership positions in the other committees.

8.15 In addition to these grassroots organisations, women are also involved in most of the voluntary welfare organisations providing a wide range of welfare services and programmes such as managing homes for the aged and the disabled. There are 39 affiliates with a total membership of about 100,000 under the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), an umbrella body of women's groups of Singapore. In 1997, women made up 28 per cent of the Management Committees of the voluntary welfare organisations under the National Council of Social Service of Singapore.

Participation in the labour movement

8.16 Under Singapore's labour laws, there are no restrictions on women joining trade unions or holding office in the union. No such restrictions exist in the by-laws or constitutions of the unions. Neither do any of the unions adopt discriminatory policies or practices that will restrict women's participation in leadership positions or in the decision-making process.

8.17 The National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) and its 78 affiliated trade unions collectively represented about 267,484 workers (as at December 1997). Of this, 44 per cent were women coming from a wide cross-section of workplaces in the manufacturing, service and public sectors. Their active participation in the labour movement demonstrates that female workers also support the principle of the freedom of association.

8.18 At the enterprise level, women held 29 per cent of the positions in 1997. The percentage showed a U-curve at higher levels, such as, at the executive committee level and the NTUC Central Committee level, where the percentage of women's involvement were 17 per cent and 19 per cent,respectively,in 1997. In 1980, 1 out of 26 members (or 3.8 per cent) of the NTUC Central Committee, the highest policy-making body of the labour movement, was a woman. In April 1998, this figure improved to 4 out of 21 members (or 19.0 per cent). Its members are elected on a triennial basis. In order to encourage more women to take up leadership positions, the NTUC and its affiliated unions run a variety of courses aimed at enhancing knowledge and developing self-confidence among women. The NTUC Women's Committee, jointly with the Singapore Institute of Labour Studies, designed a structured and progressive training course to develop effective women leaders. The programme "Training Today's Women for Tomorrow's Leadership Roles" is a three-phased programme touching on topics such as Leadership and Team Development, Building Self -Confidence, and the Legal Framework affecting Women.

8.19 In addition, the NTUC also consciously includes women delegates/representatives in both local and international conferences so that they can gain exposure as well as contribute their expertise and experiences on the subjects being discussed.

8.20 Women representatives are nominated to sit in various high-level national policy-making statutory boards which, by reason of our strong tripartite traditions, consist of representatives from government, employers and trade unions. In addition, some of the core women union leaders are also appointed to sit in the Board of Trustees, Board of Directors and Management Committees of the NTUC Co-operatives and other NTUC business ventures.

8.21 A woman trade union leader, Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, who is also the Deputy Secretary-General of NTUC, has been an elected Member of Parliament for more than a decade. This enables the view of women workers to be raised at the highest level possible in our country.

8.22 In many of the affiliated trade unions, women's programme committees have been set up to deal with issues affecting women, raise the level of awareness of women and encourage greater participation of women in the unions.

8.23 At the NTUC level, there is a Women's Committee which plans, organises and co-ordinates the efforts of the various affiliated unions. One current project being studied by the Women's Committee in conjunction with employers and the government, is looking at how greater participation of women in the labour force through flexible work arrangements can be encouraged. Surveys conducted by the Women's Committee showed that many more women were keen to join the workforce on a part-time basis so that they could continue to give full attention to their families.

8.24 Regular dialogue sessions are also held by senior NTUC officials with women leaders at every level. Such dialogue sessions help to raise the level of awareness of women on national issues and current topics of interest. Women's participation in the political and public life in the labour movement takes place at various levels and there are no impediments artificially imposed on those wishing to contribute.

9 ARTICLE 8 - REPRESENTATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

9.1 Meritocracy has always been a hallmark of the Singapore Civil Service where officers are recruited and deployed based on their merits. There is no discrimination based on sex, religion or race. The Singapore Foreign Service has a similar recruitment and deployment policy.

9.2 The Singapore Foreign Service had a male-female ratio at the senior and middle management levels of 1:0.11 during the period July 1997 to July 1998 as compared to 1:0.25 during the period July 1996 to July 1997. However, the male-female ratio of

officers' grade improved from 1:0.57 during the period July 1996 to July 1997 to 1:1.26 during the period July 1997 to July 1998.

9.3 The table and chart below shows the gender distribution of officers in the Singapore Foreign Service from July 1996 to July 1998 as follows:

TABLE 3 : GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF OFFICERS IN THE SINGAPORE FOREIGN SERVICE
July 1996 to July 1998

Category	Diplomatic Positions	July 1996 – July 1997			July 1997 – July 1998		
		Total officers		Ratio	Total officers		Ratio
		Male (M)	Female (F)	F/M	Male (M)	Female (F)	F/M
1	Senior Management	39	7	0.18	45	8	0.18
2	Middle Management	36	12	0.33	94	7	0.07
3	Officers	122	70	0.57	78	98	1.26
4	Support staff	85	126	1.48	142	186	1.31

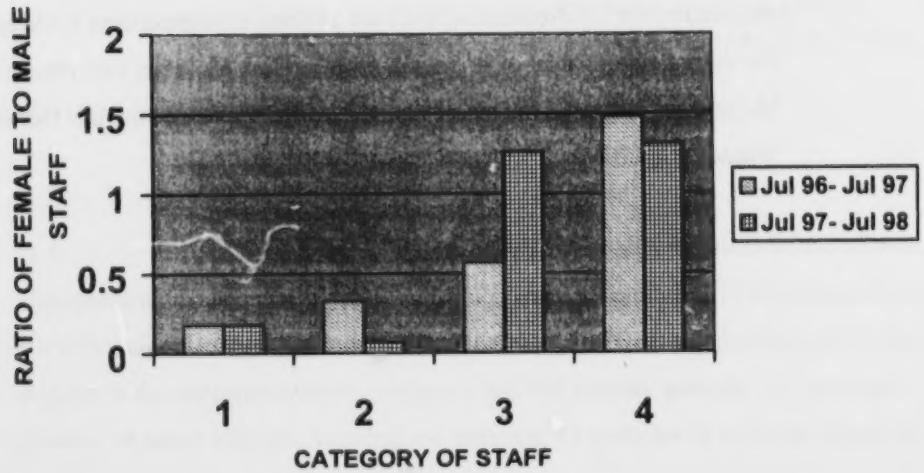
Senior Management : Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Directors.

Middle Management : Senior Deputy Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors.

Officers : Assistant Directors, Foreign Service Officers, Senior Officers

Support Staff : Personal Assistants, Stenographers and Clerical Assistants.

CHART ON GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF OFFICERS IN THE SINGAPORE FOREIGN SERVICE



9.4 Between January 1997 to July 1998, 64 officers were recruited into the diplomatic service; 50 per cent of these newly recruited officers (32 officers) were women. These female officers will in time move up the ranks to occupy the middle to senior management positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

9.5 Gender is not a determinant in the issues officers are assigned to cover. Singapore's delegations to international meetings are decided by the competence and qualifications of the individual officers.

9.6 Singapore has several female Heads of Mission. Presently, our Ambassador to Washington (Professor Chan Heng Chee), Roving Ambassador to Italy (Miss Pang Cheng Lian) and the Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York (Ms Karen Tan) are female officers. Mrs J Mohideen was our Ambassador to Brussels [November 1989 - December 1992]. Professor Chan Heng Chee was Singapore's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York and the High Commissioner to Canada [February 1989 - February 1991] and Mrs Mary Seet-Cheng was Singapore's Ambassador to Brussels [January 1992 - June 1996].

9.7 Singapore does not have a policy to place its female nationals in international organisations. Hence, no data is collected on the representation of female Singaporeans in international organisations. Singapore also has no restrictions against any Singaporean being employed by international organisations. Singaporean women appear to be well-represented in international organisations such as the UN. There are more women than men among the Singaporean staff in the UN Secretariat. According to statistics provided by the UN Secretariat, there are 11 female Singaporeans working in the UN Secretariat out of a total of 21 Singaporean staff i.e. 52.38 per cent female Singaporeans. Ms Noeleen Heyzer, a Singapore national, is the Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

10 ARTICLE 9 - RIGHTS TO NATIONALITY

10.1 The Singapore Constitution provides for equal treatment of its citizens, whether male or female, in so far as it applies to each citizen individually and personally. Hence it does not bar any deserving applicants from obtaining citizenship on their own merits.

10.2 The Singapore Constitution grants citizenship on the basis of birth, descent, registration or naturalisation. If a child is born in Singapore and his parents are legally married at the time of his birth, the child will be eligible for citizenship by birth as long as one of the parents is a Singapore citizen. In the case where a child is born overseas and his parents are legally married, his eligibility for citizenship by descent, upon application, will normally be determined by his father's nationality. This is in line with our Asian tradition where husbands are the heads of households. A Singaporean woman married to a foreigner can apply for any of her children to be a Singapore citizen by registration under her own sponsorship. Singapore adopts a non-prejudicial and impartial stand towards citizenship applications, and any deserving applicants (men & women) in their own rights would have the opportunity in obtaining citizenship for their children.

10.3 Singaporean women can sponsor their foreign spouses for Permanent Residence and Singapore Citizenship subject to the fulfilment of a minimum household income. This policy also applies to Singaporean men.

11 ARTICLE 10 - RIGHTS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING, INCLUDING PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION ON FAMILY PLANNING

(a) Access to education

11.1 The Singapore government places a very high premium on the education of Singaporeans. It allocated S$4.6 billion which was 19.4 per cent of the Financial Year 1997/98 national budget to education. In December 1997, for a population of 573,940 students in the education system, Singapore had 196 primary schools, 147 secondary schools, 14 junior colleges, 4 centralised institutes, 11 institutes of technical education, 4

polytechnics and 2 universities. The literacy rate of Singapore women aged 15 years and over has increased from 73.1 per cent in 1980 to 88.5 per cent in 1997.

11.2 Virtually all children of school-going age are in primary and secondary schools. Except for a few primary and secondary schools which are single-sexed, all the other educational institutions including the universities and polytechnics are co-educational. Male and female students have equal access to educational institutions that offer the same academic standards and teachers use the same resources. Even in single-sexed schools, those for female students are given similarly qualified personnel and facilities as other schools. Indeed, some of them have higher academic standards than those in the co-educational schools. Table 4 below shows the enrolment of males and females in the various educational institutions in 1997.

TABLE 4: ENROLMENT IN THE VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS 1997

Level	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Primary Schools	145,805	52.05	134,303	47.95	280,108
Secondary schools, Junior Colleges & Centralised Institutes	108,913	51.90	100,921	48.10	209,834
Institutes of Technical Education	6,204	74.54	2,119	25.45	8,323
Polytechnics	25,503	54.74	21,089	45.26	46,592
Universities [for 1st degree only and includes National Institute of Education (NIE) figures]	16,200	48.94	16,903	51.06	33,103
Grand Total	302,625	52.36	275,335	47.64	577,960

11.3 In the tertiary institutions, the number of females admitted yearly is also large. Table 5 below shows that female students comprise more than 50 per cent of the university intake annually from 1995 to 1997. In the polytechnics, the percentage of female intake is around 47 per cent.

TABLE 5 : UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE & POLYTECHNIC FULL-TIME INTAKES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 1995/96 to 1997/98

Academic Year	95/96			96/97			97/98		
Sex	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Universities [for 1st degree only and includes National Institute of Education (NIE) figures]	4310 44.78%	5315 55.22%	9625 100%	4743 44.8%	5845 55.2%	10588 100%	4988 45.9%	5874 54.1%	10862 100%
Polytechnics	8404 54.55%	7003 45.45%	15407 100%	8584 54.09%	7287 45.91%	15871 100%	8770 53.2%	7706 46.8%	16,476 100%
Total	12714 50.80%	12318 49.20%	25032 100%	13327 50.37%	13132 49.63%	26459 100%	13758 50.3%	13580 49.7%	27338 100%

11.4 In the primary schools, both male and female students follow a common curriculum. In the lower secondary classes, they continue to follow a common curriculum, including studying both Home Economics and Design and Technology.

11.5 At the upper secondary level and beyond, both male and female students study a range of subjects (core and elective) available in their respective courses. Hence, they have equal opportunities in choosing subjects they like as their subject combinations. Indeed, in the universities, more female students are encouraged to join the engineering courses, a traditionally male domain, to meet the increasing demand for engineers. In 1997, a record 773 females out of 3,017 new students were recruited into the engineering courses of the 2 universities. Thus, 1 in 4 of the first year engineering students are females, compared to 1 in 8 just 2 years ago.

11.6 Equal access to education remains one of our cardinal principles. Women made up 51.1 per cent of the university student population in the 1997/1998 intake. Equal access to university education does not mean that every student has a free choice as to the type of course he or she may pursue, as this depends on the number of places available for each course. The number of available places depends on several considerations, such as our national needs, economic and human resources.

Scholarships and Bursaries

11.7 Both male and female students have equal opportunities to compete for scholarships at the tertiary level. Even the most prestigious scholarship in the land, the President's Scholarship, is awarded to male and female students purely on merit. The following table shows the proportion of females awarded scholarships correlated to the number of applications by females for the period 1995 to 1997:

TABLE 6 - NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO MALE AND FEMALE APPLICANTS 1995 to 1997

Year of Award	Applications Received		Scholarships/Bursaries Awarded	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1995	799 (61%)	515 (39%)	139 (60%)	92 (40%)
1996	984 (62.7%)	586 (37.3%)	127 (58.5%)	90 (41.5%)
1997	799 (64%)	445 (36%)	157 (67%)	78 (33%)

School drop-outs

11.8 Singapore places a very high premium on educating its citizens. Hence, when pupils show signs of dropping out of the school system, it is viewed with deep concern, though the percentage of school drop-outs is small. In 1997, out of a population of 467,523 pupils in the primary and secondary schools, 1,798 (0.4 per cent) left school prematurely. Of these, 894 (49.7 per cent) were girls. School principals pay close attention to these cases, regardless of gender. Such pupils are counselled by their schools. The principals and the teachers do their utmost to dissuade the pupils from dropping out. If these efforts fail, the principals, with the concurrence of the parents, refer the matter through the Ministry of Education to self-help groups of the various ethnic communities in Singapore and other social service organisations for counselling and other assistance. These groups may be able to do a little more as families can identify with them better. Even if these groups fail in their efforts, principals do re-admit such pupils if they want to rejoin the school system within a reasonable period of time.

School's curriculum & textbooks

11.9 In the curriculum itself, there is no stereotyping of roles based on gender. The syllabi and textbooks do not allow bias against women. Conscious attempts are made to ensure that educational materials do not stereotype the position of women in any detrimental or derogatory manner that will hinder their progress, welfare or career opportunities. Indeed, as our educational institutions are a microcosm of society which stresses heavily on meritocracy, our students are well aware that gender is not the basis of achievement in education and in life.

11.10 The curriculum is a means to disseminate values cherished by society. These include values which can strengthen the family and promote the importance of sharing of roles and responsibilities by both male and female members of the family. The Civics and Moral Education syllabus include components on the Family where issues such as Family Harmony and Communication, Roles in the Family and Responsible Parenthood are discussed. Students are taught moral concepts such as family unity, love, respect and care for elders, communicating and co-operating with family members, sharing household responsibilities and upholding the sanctity of marriage and the importance of parenthood. By imbibing these concepts, pupils can help promote a harmonious family life as well as practise them. Another outcome of learning these concepts is the awareness of the very important place of women in the family.

Physical education

11.11 As in the academic area, opportunities and resources for sports and physical education are equally allocated for both male and female students in Singapore's educational institutions. The resources include common facilities which both sexes use. The use of these facilities is not restricted by the attire of the female students. Thus female Muslim students, for example, can vary their attire to suit religious requirements in participating in physical activities should they wish to.

Gender staffing of schools

11.12 The Education Service is one that has a predominance of women. Of the 21,862 teachers in the service in 1997, 15,477 (70.8 per cent) were women. In the same year, there were 182 (52.6 per cent) female principals out of 346. In the Ministry of Education Headquarters, out of 17 Senior Management Staff, 10 (58.8 per cent) were women.

Continuing education and training

11.13 In terms of training, equal opportunity is given to workers of both sexes. The Productivity and Standards Board's [PSB] Institute for Productivity Training reviewed a sample of 31 public courses for adults. 30 out of 31 courses do not specify gender preference as entry requirements. The exception is a course on "Women Leadership into the 21st century" which is designed specifically for woman. In 1997, 45.2 per cent of the 13,127 participants for the courses conducted by the PSB were females. This figure matched with the overall profile of female workers in the workforce in 1997 which was 41 per cent.

11.14 "Communicating from the Head and Heart" for women is a two-day course launched recently by the Civil Service College for female Division II Officers [i.e. those officers with A-Level, Polytechnic Diploma, or equivalent qualifications]. The first run was held in September 1996. The College has noted that women officers often communicate in a style that sets them apart from men. The objectives of the course are to help the participants handle people situations with confidence, sensitivity and assertiveness.

11.15 The Institute of Technical Education [ITE] provides full-time training to its male and female students. The training combines theoretical instruction with practical sessions in the laboratories, workshops and simulated industrial settings. This is aimed at equipping students with the necessary broad-based functional skills and knowledge in a wide range of occupations for the manufacturing, commerce and service sectors. In the area of continuing education, equal opportunities are also provided by the ITE for working adults, both male and female, to upgrade their general education on a part-time basis to the General Certificate in Education [GCE] Normal, Ordinary and Advanced Levels. In

addition, at the workplace, the ITE provides literacy and numeracy skills primarily for male and female workers who have, through the lack of opportunities in the early years of Singapore's economic development, missed out on a basic education. To help these workers, ITE launched two national workers' educational programmes, viz. the Basic Education for Skills Training [BEST] programme in 1983 and the Worker Improvement through Secondary Education programme [WISE] in 1987. These programmes were introduced because of the need to raise the level of education of such male and female workers to achieve functional competencies in the English Language and Mathematics, thereby laying the foundation for skills training and further academic education. In 1997, the enrolment of women participants in the BEST and WISE programmes run by the ITE constituted about 67 per cent and 62 per cent of the intake respectively.

Health Education

11.16 School children during their primary and secondary school years are taught a wide range of health topics such as growth and development, nutrition, exercise, dental health, avoiding smoking and other substance abuse, mental health, sexually-transmitted disease/AIDS, female cancers and breast self-examination, preparation for puberty and family life. These topics are covered in subjects such as health education and science in primary schools and home economics, civics and physical education, general science and biology in secondary schools. The Ministry of Health assists the Ministry of Education in the drafting of materials and training of teachers to ensure efficient delivery of these topics. The Health Ministry's Resource Centre houses a variety of audio-visual aids and displays that are available for loan free of charge to schools for teaching.

11.17 Extra curricular programmes also address these and other topics like breast self-examination. Talks, exhibitions, health fairs, quizzes, competitions and education through drama are organised regularly by the schools with the assistance and resources from the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organisations like the Singapore Cancer Society and the Singapore Planned Parenthood Association.

11.18 Health education and health promotion for all Singaporeans is a primary concern of the Ministry of Health. The National Healthy Lifestyle Programme, the National

Smoking Control Campaign and education on diabetes, cancer, mental and dental health and AIDS are major programmes reaching all adults.

AIDS and Women

11.19 Since 1991, heterosexual transmission is the most common mode of HIV transmission in Singapore. With the increasing trend of heterosexual transmission of the disease in the population, the incidence of HIV infection among women of reproductive age and babies born with the infection is expected to increase. With the changing trend of HIV transmission and the availability of effective treatment and other preventive measures to reduce perinatal transmission of HIV infection, all antenatal women are advised to be screened for HIV infection. To encourage them to come forward for screening, HIV screening is offered at a subsidised rate to all antenatal women at government polyclinics. Pre and post-HIV test counselling is also provided so as to reinforce the general precautions to be taken to prevent HIV infection.

11.20 Education on health issues and special concerns for the female population like family planning, ante natal care, women's cancers and menopause are conducted in healthcare institutions, the workplace, community centres and places of worship including mosques, temples and churches. All couples registering for marriage are invited to talks on human reproduction, contraception and family relationships. In the government polyclinics, health education sessions for pregnant women on ante natal care, preparation for childbirth, and care of the infant are available. Under the Well Women Programme, women are taught breast self-examination and screened for hypertension, diabetes, breast and cervical cancers.

11.21 A wide variety of print materials is distributed free of charge to schools, workplaces, community centres and places of worship. Topics covered include family planning and contraceptive methods, infant and child feeding, immunisation, women's cancers, osteoporosis, menopause, besides other more general topics. Health messages are reinforced regularly through the mass media. Feature programmes and advertisements reach all Singaporeans through the radio, print media and television.

12 ARTICLE 11 - RIGHTS TO EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL SECURITY AND SUPPORTING SOCIAL SERVICES INCLUDING CHILD CARE FACILITIES

12.1 Singapore has entered a reservation to Article 11 for two reasons. In the case of Article 11, paragraph 1, where reservation was entered in the light of Article 4, paragraph 2, the reservation is to safeguard the welfare of women and their unborn children in certain hazardous occupations. This is in line with the CEDAW's recommendation under Article 11, paragraph 1(f) to safeguard the function of reproduction. Whereas in the case of Article 11, paragraph 2, the reservation is in regards to persons in managerial, executive and confidential positions, seamen as well as domestic workers, who are excluded from the Employment Act. The Act stipulates the minimum terms and conditions of employment, including maternity protection and maternity benefit.

12.2 While the Employment Act does not offer protection to female workers in these categories, the basis for the exclusion is not gender-based. Personnel in managerial and executive positions are excluded as they are in a better position to negotiate for their own terms and conditions of employment. Hence, they do not require the protection of the Employment Act. Seamen, domestic workers and persons in confidential positions are excluded from the Act as it is difficult to enforce the Act because of the nature of their work. The exclusion from coverage under the Employment Act is not gender-based and is therefore not discriminatory against female workers.

12.3 Although managerial, executive and confidential employees, domestic workers and seamen are not covered by the Employment Act, the Ministry of Manpower provides a free conciliation service to help them resolve salary claims with their employers. Most disputes have been successfully conciliated and amicable solutions reached. These workers may also seek redress through the civil court.

Labour laws

12.4 Singapore's legislation does not contain any provision that discriminates workers by gender. There is equality of treatment in respect of employment terms and compensation for work-related injuries in various occupations. Women in Singapore are thus not excluded from any occupation due to less favourable legal protection.

12.5 More women are now in the professional, managerial, administrative and technical positions. The proportion increased from 12 per cent in 1980 to 33.7 per cent in 1997. More women are also in the Finance and Business Services Sector. The proportion of women involved in this Sector increased from 9.2 per cent in 1980 to 18.3 per cent in 1997. However, nearly half of those in the clerical, sales, service, service-related and production jobs were women in 1997 (48.2 per cent).

12.6 The difference between the sexes in the Average Monthly Earnings has narrowed over the years. In 1986, the Average Monthly Earnings of females was 68 per cent of the Average Monthly Earnings of the males [or S$899 out of S$1,328]. This improved to 76 per cent in 1997 [or S$2,114 out of S$2,781][31]. The narrowing of the wage gap is largely attributed to the increasing proportion of females receiving higher education and being in a position to secure better paid jobs. While general wage disparity between the two genders exists, this phenomenon is due largely to legitimate work-related reasons rather than discrimination at the workplace. Factors that could account for the wage gap include differences in years of work experience (as women tend to drop out of the workforce after marriage and childbirth), difference in job preferences as well as the fact that women had to devote more time in child care and family responsibilities than their careers as compared to men.

12.7 The Ministry of Manpower's Employment Service Department helps to co-ordinate and match the demand and supply of jobs registered with the Department. The Department aims to promote better utilisation of manpower resources and to draw the economically inactive, especially the housewives and older persons, into the workforce. Applicants are matched to jobs based on their suitability regardless of gender.

12.8 The NTUC Women's Committee initiated the "Back To Work - Are you Ready?" campaign in June 1995 to assist non-working women return to the workforce. Thirteen workshops were held at community centres to reach out to non-working women who wished to re-enter the workforce. Through these workshops, participants better understand the present employment and training opportunities available to them. Employers

[31] Information obtained from the Ministry of Manpower.

from various sectors were also invited to participate in these workshops for the recruitment of staff.

12.9 The then Ministry of Labour (currently the Ministry of Manpower), in conjunction with the Singapore Productivity & Standards Board (PSB), the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Singapore National Employers' Federation (SNEF) launched a tripartite "Back to Work" programme in September 1996. The programme aims at encouraging employers to tap the pool of housewives and retirees by providing suitable employment so that they could be attracted to rejoin the workforce. Among other promotional activities, the tripartite partners organise job fairs at community centres to help bring together potential job seekers and employers. Job seekers are also encouraged to approach the participating companies in the programme directly. To-date, more than 4,000 persons (mostly married females) have found employment and undergone skills training under the programme.

12.10 At the workplace, female employees are protected by existing labour legislation against any form of discriminatory practices and exploitation. There are also adequate avenues for aggrieved workers to seek redress. Under Section 14(2) of the Employment Act, an employee covered by the Act who considers that he/she has been wrongfully dismissed by his/her employer, which includes discrimination of any kind, has recourse to appeal to the Minister for Manpower to be reinstated. This has to be done within a month. The same right applies to any female employee.

12.11 In the case of unionised employees, they may seek recourse through their union representatives under Section 35(2) of the Industrial Relations Act if they have been wrongfully dismissed.

12.12 While ensuring that female employees enjoy equal employment terms and conditions, there are also legislation to ensure that they are equally protected and compensated for work-related injuries. The Workmen's Compensation Act and its subsidiary legislation enable an employee, who comes under the definition of "workman" under the Act, to claim for compensation in a work-related accident. There is no discrimination in terms of race, sex or religion in the definition of a "workman".

12.13 The Employment of Female Workmen Regulations prohibit the employment of a pregnant female worker during the night, i.e. from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. the next day unless she has given her consent to do such work in writing and is not certified medically unfit for work by a medical practitioner or medical officer.

12.14 The Factories [Medical Examination] Regulations requires workers employed in hazardous occupations to undergo periodic medical examinations. A doctor may recommend suspension from work if he is of the view that such work has affected the worker's health or continuation of such work would affect the worker's health or that of the unborn child if that worker is pregnant.

12.15 Wages in Singapore are determined by the market forces of demand and supply. The minimum wage payable by employers to workers in any trade, profession or industry is not prescribed by law. Wages are negotiated either through collective bargaining for unionised workers or through individual employment contracts mutually agreed upon between the workers and their employers. The Singapore Civil Service has adopted the principle of equal pay for equal work since 1962 and this has set the ideal to be aimed for in employment.

12.16 The Ministry of Manpower has yet to come across any employment contract that has discriminated workers based on their sexes. The Ministry of Manpower regularly reviews its labour legislation to ensure their relevance and applicability in the light of changes in the workplace.

12.17 The Retirement Age Act was introduced by government on 1 July 1993 to raise the retirement age from 55 to 60 years to encourage workers including women to continue working. The retirement age was raised to 62 as from 1 January 1999. This will be revised gradually in steps to 67 years, in the next 7 to 10 years.

Leave eligibility

12.18 Equality and non-discrimination exists with respect to the right to social security and paid leave in Singapore. Under the Employment Act, a female employee is entitled to 8 weeks of maternity leave during which she is paid the full salary if at the time

of her confinement, she has less than 2 children and has worked more than 180 days before her confinement date. An employer of a female employee cannot at any time by law, require the female employee to work during the 4 weeks before and 4 weeks after her confinement.

12.19 Section 81 of the Employment Act prohibits an employer from terminating the service of a female employee while she is on maternity leave and it also prohibits the employer from using the benefit period as notice of termination. An employer is not allowed under Section 84 of the same Act to deprive a female employee of her maternity benefit by terminating her service within a period of 3 months before her confinement date unless the termination is with sufficient cause.

12.20 In the Civil Service, women officers are allowed to take full-pay leave to look after their sick children who are below 6 years old up to 5 days for each child subject to a maximum of 15 days for 3 or more children per annum. This is in addition to the annual leave eligibility of the officer.

Social security

12.21 The Central Provident Fund (CPF) Scheme helps to provide social security for workers. The CPF is a compulsory social security savings scheme that takes care of a member's needs in retirement, health care, home ownership, family protection and asset enhancement. It is jointly supported by employees, employers and the government. Every employer is liable to pay monthly CPF contributions for his employees, including those who are above the withdrawal age of 55 years and those on temporary, probationary, part-time, monthly, daily, weekly or piece-rated employment. The amount of contributions payable is dependent on the ages and wages of the employees. The benefits administered under the CPF Schemes are the same for all members, regardless of gender. There is no element of inequality in the CPF Schemes. These benefits of the CPF system include tax-exemption on CPF contributions, CPF top-ups by the government, and buying of shares of government/statutory boards as and when they are privatised.

12.22 In addition, CPF members are eligible for various schemes which offer financial protection benefits to the CPF members and their dependants, regardless of their gender. The dependants may include spouse, parents and children. The schemes are:

(a) the MediShield Scheme;

This low-cost medical insurance scheme helps the insured meet the treatment cost of serious and prolonged illness. CPF members may use their CPF savings to pay the insurance premiums for their dependants who are covered under MediShield.

(b) the Dependant's Protection Scheme;

This scheme provides CPF members and their dependants with financial assistance in the event that the members become permanently incapacitated or die prematurely.

(c) the Home Protection Scheme;

This scheme protects CPF members and their dependants from losing their homes should the members become permanently incapacitated or die prematurely before their housing loans are settled.

12.23 For non-working adults, there is no compulsory CPF contribution. However, to help these members set aside enough savings for their basic old age and health care needs, voluntary contributions to their CPF accounts are encouraged. For example, the CPF contribution for a non-working wife can come from her working husband or children. The contributions can be in cash or from the CPF of the contributing members. Housewives can receive monthly payments out of their CPF accounts from the age of 60 years and this will ensure them of an income during old age. Thus, a non-working adult, whether male or female, may also participate in the CPF system and enjoy all its benefits.

Supporting social services

Child care centres :

12.24 Since 1980, the government through the Ministry of Community Development has been promoting and regulating the development and operation of child care centres to meet the child care needs of working parents. This is in line with the national effort to support women's participation in the labour force. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate has increased from 44.3 per cent in 1980 to 51.1 per cent in 1997. The thrust of the child care centre programme is directed at making child care centres widely available and affordable, and ensuring acceptable standards of care in child care centres.

12.25 Financial support and incentives are given to non-profit organisations and employers to encourage the development and expansion of their child care centres. These include :

a) capital grants for the conversion and renovation costs of premises released by the Housing and Development Board (HDB), the housing authority in Singapore;
b) capital grants for purchasing and equipping new centres;
c) non-commercial or subsidised rent for the use of HDB premises;
d) capital grants for cyclical maintenance of premises released by government or the HDB; and
e) general tax treatment for employers for the development and operation of work-place child care centre.

12.26 To make child care more affordable and to encourage married women to work, government child care subsidies are extended to eligible parents using licensed child care centres for their first to fourth child. This subsidy is to help defray the cost of placing their children in such centres. The subsidy for a child attending the full-day care programme is S$150 per month per child and S$75 per month per child for those attending half-day care programmes. Government's expenditure on child care subsidies totalled about S$44 million in Financial Year 1996/97 and this increased to $48 million for Financial Year 1997/98.

12.27 To help families who are not able to afford the cost of child care centres, there is a special scheme known as "The Centre-based Financial Assistance Scheme for Child Care" (CFAC) which provides short-term relief for such families. Such schemes help mothers from disadvantaged families to take up employment and to remain in the work force. The scheme is meant for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents. Mothers must be working, actively looking for work or undergoing training for a job. Successful applicants are given additional subsidy of S$50 to S$100 depending on the size and net income of the family. As at 31 March 1998, a total of 797 families benefited from the scheme and a total of S$1,139,000 was disbursed from the Fund since its implementation.

12.28 The total enrolment in child care centres as at 31 March 1998 was 31,758 children. This includes both full-day and half-day programmes. The total number of child care centres as at 31 March 1998 was 471 centres and by the year 2000, 549 centres will be set up.

Nursery Schools & Kindergartens:

12.29 There is a variety of such pre-school education programmes available in Singapore which are run mainly by private organisations. Community organisations, religious bodies and other voluntary welfare organisations also provide these programmes as part of their services to the community.

12.30 Kindergartens in Singapore provide a formalised 3-year pre-school education programme for children ages above 3 years to less than 6 years as children start school as first graders at about the age of 6^{+} years or so. As at 31 December 1997, there were 441 private kindergartens and of these, 17 were foreign system kindergartens catering to children of expatriates in Singapore.

Student Care Centres Programmes:

12.31 In 1996, the Government through the Ministry of Community Development, began promoting the development of Student Care Centres (SCCS). Non-profit making organisations are encouraged by government to set up SCCs Programmes. The aim is to

prevent young children from falling into bad company when being left unattended or exposed to risk and dangers before and after school hours when their parents are at work. To encourage non-profit making organisations to set up SCCs programmes, the Government also provides funding support and incentives to these organisations. These include:

a) capital grants of furniture and equipment for new centres;
b) release of HDB premises at non-commercial or subsidised rent; and
c) capital grants for cyclical maintenance of premises.

12.32 Low-income families are eligible for subsidies from government for sending children, aged between 6 and 14 years, to approved Student Care Centres (SCCs) run by non-profit making organisations. Subsidies are provided to these families on a sliding scale to encourage parents to co-pay and to share responsibilities. The level of subsidy ranges from 25 per cent to 75 per cent of the approved fees. Families earning less than S$1,500 a month receive a 75 per cent subsidy of the approved fee. Families who are not able to pay the remaining 25 per cent of the fees are given further assistance through other support schemes. From December 1996 to December 1997, a total of about S$4 million was disbursed by Government to help these families. As at 31 March 1998, there were 89 such centres run by non-profit making organisations, out of which 73 of them receive funding from Government. More SCCs are being planned over the next 5 years.

Special schemes and flexible work arrangements

12.33 As a measure to help females reconcile dual responsibilities at work and at home, the Ministry of Manpower had in 1990 announced a set of part-time employment guidelines to promote part-time employment. These Guidelines gazetted as Regulations under the Employment Act on 1 October 1996 are to assist employers in formulating attractive part-time schemes to retain existing working mothers who intend to leave the labour market and to attract those who are currently not in the labour market. Out of a total of 60,059 part-time workers in 1997, 68.6 per cent were women.

12.34 The Manpower Ministry's Employment Service Department together with the Singapore Productivity & Standards Board [PSB], the Singapore National Employers' Federation [SNEF] and the NTUC launched a new programme on 13 September 1996. This

is the "Back to Work" programme to get people including housewives and retirees, to return to the workforce. The programme is targeted at about 150,000 women and older men who are not employed. On-the-job training is provided when they start working full-time, part-time or flexi time.

12.35 The Employment Service Department works closely with employers and unions to promote flexi-work and part-time employment to help create more employment opportunities which can help women to balance work with family responsibilities. Through the co-operation of unions and employers' organisations, the Ministry aims to change the mindsets of employers and employees in respect of part-time and flexible work arrangement. Employers are also encouraged to devise innovative schemes and training programmes to help attract housewives to return to the workforce.

12.36 In the Singapore Civil Service, there is no compelling reason to ensure symmetry in the benefits for male and female officers. Instead, benefits are designed to meet different needs as appropriate. In this regard, women officers are allowed to take full-pay leave to look after their sick children who are below 6 years old up to 5 days for each child subject to a maximum of 15 days for 3 or more children per annum. This is in addition to the annual leave eligibility of the officer. Mothers may also apply for no-pay leave to look after their children who are below 4 years of age up to a maximum of 4 years per child without loss of status upon returning to work. Previously, mothers who were unable to work full-time because of child-care commitments could apply to work part-time when their children were below the age of 6 years. With effect from 1 July 1996, the part-time employment scheme in the Civil Service was revised. The key changes relate to eligibility, work arrangements and pro-ration of salaries and benefits. Married female permanent officers with children, regardless of age of children, can now choose to work part-time due to child care and family commitments. Such measures allow women who want or need time for child care and other family commitments, greater flexibility in balancing their work and family commitments more effectively and without loss of job.

13 ARTICLE 12 - RIGHTS TO HEALTH CARE

13.1 The government budgetary allocation for health was S$1.12 billion, or 0.85 per cent of the GDP for 1996, S$1.21 billion or 0.83 per cent of the GDP for 1997 and S$1.23 billion or 0.78 per cent of the GDP for 1998.

13.2 There is a public network of 21 polyclinics and a School Health Service providing screening, primary medical and dental treatment, preventive medicine and health education, and 10 government and re-structured hospitals, including one specialising in the care of women and children, and centres for Heart, Eye, Blood and Skin Diseases. These are augmented by a private system which adds 80 per cent of primary health services from private clinics and 20 per cent of hospital services through 13 private hospitals. The total number of hospitals beds is 11,030 for a population of about 3.103 million. Among the numerous healthcare personnel, there are 4,912 doctors of whom 40 per cent are specialists, 878 dentists/dental specialists, 14,705 nurses/midwives, and 944 pharmacists (figures are as at 31 December 1997).

13.3 In the public sector, medical costs are heavily subsidised. There is an element of co-sharing on a sliding scale for those who can afford it, together with payments from Medisave[32], Medishield[33] and Medifund[34].

13.4 Singapore has attained parity with the advanced industrialised countries in the health status of its population including women. Female life expectancy at birth reached 79.2 years in 1997, compared to 75.0 for men. Women have equal access to nutrition, education and health programmes in Singapore. Female Infant Mortality Rate has fallen from 7.7 to 3.1 per thousand resident live births from 1980 to 1997. The Maternal Mortality Rate has also fallen from 0.05 to 0.04 per thousand live and still births from 1980 to 1997

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[32] Medisave started since 1984, is a compulsory savings scheme. Every working adult is required by law to save 6-8 per cent of his/her monthly salary in Medisave. By allowing it to be used also for spouses, parents and children, Medisave is also a form of family insurance.

[33] Medishield, first introduced in 1990, is a low-cost medical insurance scheme for CPF members and their families i.e. spouse, children, parents & grandparents, who are Singapore citizens or permanent residents. It helps to meet the high medical costs of prolonged or serious illnesses. For as low a premium as S$12 a year (depending on age), an insured person can claim up to a yearly limit of S$20,000 and a lifetime limit of S$80,000. Annual premiums are payable from the Medisave Accounts. The age coverage was extended to 75 years in July 1996.

[34] Medifund is a government health programme to help the poor and needy from the Health Endowment Fund. No citizen in Singapore is deprived of health care however poor he/she is. Every hospital has a Medifund Committee which looks at individual applicants and consider their financial situations. Over 97 per cent of the applications considered received assistance.

respectively. The contraceptive practice rate is 61.8 per cent and the Total Fertility Rate is low, at 1.6 per woman in 1997.

13.5 On reproductive health, on-going programmes are organised to educate women on the use of contraceptives, avoidance of casual sex, prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, abortions, cervical and breast cancer screening, ante natal/postnatal care and the compulsory child immunisation programme, genetic counselling and the spacing of children. Conversely, several public and private hospitals offer in-vitro fertilisation programmes. Family Life Education has been introduced nation-wide to promote family life and to educate ante natal/postnatal mothers, high risk groups and the general public on the importance of health promotion and disease prevention.

13.6 Women made up 54.8 per cent of those aged 65 years and over in 1997 and among those aged 80 years and above, the proportion averaged at 61.4 per cent from 1995-1997. Compared to 1965, the proportion of single women aged 30 - 39 years increased from 4.2 per cent to 18.2 per cent in 1996. These statistics have implications for the ageing population. Since women live longer than men, women will be in the majority among the "old-old" population, i.e. those over 75 years.

13.7 A wide range of community-based health and social service help families and the elderly remain active and live within the community and to cater for the special needs of the elderly are available. For the women, special services include the well women clinic which provides screening for cancer of the breast and cervix, hypertension and diabetes. Currently, three hospitals offer education, counselling and management of menopausal problems through their Climacteric Clinics. The Health Services for the Elderly provides community health care including home nursing, rehabilitation and health screening services.

13.8 The Ministry of Health has set up a Division of Elderly Services in 1997. The primary role of the Division is to strengthen the national infrastructure for the delivery of health-related services to the elderly, and to build up a co-ordinated network of such services. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Health Care for the Elderly chaired by the Minister for Health and co-chaired by the Minister for Community Development was set up in 1997 to review the health care needs of the elderly and to identify measures to ensure

their health needs will continue to be met and remain affordable. The Government has accepted, in principle, the Committee's Report and its recommendations. The Ministry of Health will work with relevant agencies to implement the recommendations.

13.9 A National Committee on Women's Health was established in April 1997 to look into the areas of concern on women's health. Chaired by the Senior Minister of State for Health, the Committee comprises representatives from the academia, People's Association, Television Corporation of Singapore Pte Ltd, hospitals, the National Trade Union Congress Healthcare besides the Ministry of Health. Amongst other things, the Committee has made recommendations to improve women's health and proposed new programmes to fill existing gaps. It will co-ordinate and harness public support for programmes to improve women's health, including public education and community based programmes.

14 ARTICLE 13 - RIGHTS TO FAMILY BENEFITS, CREDIT FACILITIES, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Taxation

14.1 The present provisions of the Income Tax Act allows a wife who is working and maintaining a non-working husband to effectively claim relief for her husband, though indirectly. The law provides that except where a wife opts to be assessed separately from her husband, her income is deemed to be the income of the husband.

14.2 Under the Singapore Income Tax Act, taxpayers with similar circumstances are entitled to the same tax relief, irrespective of sex. No relief has been denied to a woman who qualifies for the relief, on basis of her sex. In fact, married female taxpayers enjoy more favourable tax treatment than their spouses as some relief are specifically given to them. For instance, to encourage married women to work, a larger amount of relief for children and relief for employing domestic maids are only allowable against the income of married women. In a case where a wife is working and the husband has no income, the income of the wife can be declared on a combined basis in the name of the husband i.e. the husband is treated as the taxpayer. In such a case, wife relief will be allowed. This has the

same effect as allowing a wife to claim relief where she is maintaining the husband, assuming that the amount of relief for maintenance of husband or wife is the same.

Public Housing

14.3 The Housing & Development Board (HDB) is the sole provider of public housing in Singapore. It is also seriously committed to meet the housing needs of low-income families, the elderly and others. Its Home Ownership Scheme consists of the Public Scheme, the Special Eligibility Schemes and the Priority Schemes.

14.4 Under the Public Scheme, applicants must have a family nucleus and satisfy citizenship, age, income ceiling and other criteria. A family nucleus comprises:-

a) applicant and his/her spouse, with children (if any); or
b) applicant (single) and his/ her parents, with siblings (if any); or
c) applicant (widowed, separated or divorced) and children legally under his/her custody.

14.5 The Special Eligibility Schemes allow applicants who are unable to form a family nucleus to be able to still apply for a flat if they can satisfy the conditions of the schemes, i.e.:-

a) the Fiance / Fiancee Scheme;
Couples intending to get married may register to purchase an HDB flat under this scheme.
b) the Joint Singles Scheme;
Two single persons may apply to purchase an HDB flat provided they satisfy the conditions e.g. both applicants must satisfy the age requirement of 35 years old for unmarried persons and divorcees and 21 years old for widowed persons or orphans. Both singles must be joint applicants and are Singapore Citizens. They need not be of the same sex and need not be related.

14.6 The Priority Schemes allow priority in allocation of HDB flats. The schemes include :

a) the Multi-Tier Family (MTF) Scheme which encourages extended family to reside in the same flat;

b) the Third Child Priority (TCP) Scheme which promotes three-child family norm; and

c) the Joint Selection (JS) Scheme which encourages married children and parents to reside in different flats within the same estate to foster family interaction and care of aged parents.

14.7 HDB also provides rental housing for citizens under the Public Scheme and non-citizens under the Integrated Non-Citizens Housing Scheme and the Dormitory Housing Scheme. For all these Schemes, there is no discrimination against women as long as the eligibility criteria are satisfied. Flats are allocated regardless of the sex of the applicants.

Recreational & Sports Activities

14.8 In Singapore, every resident (whether male or female) is encouraged to participate in sports and recreational activities. There are no legal restrictions to participating in recreational activities in Singapore. The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) promotes sports and recreational activities and programmes for women, as part of its overall sports and fitness promotion for all Singaporeans. In 1996, it launched its Sports For All programme to promote sports to all Singaporeans, targeting at "housewives" amongst others. The different top 20 sports amongst females as compared to males in the Table 7 show that different genders have different sports interest and that most sports are still relatively more popular with men.

14.9 At the Inter-Constituency level, tournaments organised for badminton, bowling, cross-country, squash, swimming, table tennis and tennis require at least a woman participant in the various categories submitted for the tournaments. In addition, the inter-constituency netball tournaments are also held for ladies. While it has been found that

males tend to have a higher rate of sports participation as compared to females (40 per cent of adult males are regular sport participants as compared to 28 per cent of adult females), the Singapore Sports Council is continuing its efforts to promote greater sports participation amongst females.

TABLE 7 : RANKING OF SPORTS ENGAGED IN BY SPORTS PARTICIPANTS AGED 15 YEARS & ABOVE

[extracted from the "National Survey on Sports Participation 1997"]

	Females			Males		
	Sports Ranking	**%**	**#Regular Participants**	**Sports Ranking**	**%**	**#Regular Participants**
1	Jogging	7.9	93 000	Jogging	13.2	155 000
2	Swimming	6.7	79 000	Soccer	9.4	110 000
3	Walking	6.4	76 000	Swimming	8.5	100 000
4	Badminton	2.9	35 000	Basketball	4.5	52 000
5	Cycling	2.3	27 000	Walking	4.3	50 000
6	Callisthenics	1.5	18 000	Badminton	4	47 000
7	Gym workout	1.5	17 000	Cycling	2.9	34 000
8	Tennis	1.4	17 000	Golf	2.7	32 000
9	Rhythmic exercises (+ aqua)	1.2	14 000	Tennis	2.1	24 000
10	Basketball	1.2	14 000	Gym workout	1.7	20 000
11	Qigong	1.0	12 000	Tenpin bowling	1.1	13 000
12	Taiji Quan	0.8	9 000	Callisthenics	1.1	13 000
13	Netball	0.7	8 000	Squash	0.9	10 000
14	Golf	0.7	8 000	Athletics	0.8	9 000
15	Athletics	0.6	7 000	Sepak Takraw	0.6	7 000
16	Dancing (all forms)	0.6	7 000	Table Tennis	0.5	6 000
17	Squash	0.5	5 000	Taiji Quan	0.5	6 000
18	Tenpin Bowling	0.4	5 000	Weightlifting	0.5	6 000
19	Volleyball	0.4	5 000	Billiards/Snooker	0.5	6 000
20	Soccer	0.4	4 000	Fishing	0.5	6 000
	*Total number of females aged 15 years and above :		1 178 000	*Total number of males aged 15 years and above		1 172 000

#Participated in the sport at least once a week; Figures are derived by grossing up the percentages in the sample to the over-all adult female and male population base. *Refer to over-all adult female and male population, based on available information (Yearbook of Statistics, May 1996) at the point when the National Sports Participation Survey Report was written.

14.10 In Singapore, there is no discrimination against women participating or attending any aspect of cultural life. All schemes adopted by the National Arts Council (NAC)[35], like financial assistance and training grants, are open equally to women and men.

14.11 Table 8 shows more women receiving scholarships, bursaries and arts training grants for the past three financial years:

TABLE 8 : GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOLARSHIPS, BURSARIES AND ARTS TRAINING GRANTS FINANCIAL YEAR 1995 TO 1997

Type of Grant	Financial Year 1995			Financial Year 1996			Financial Year 1997		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Scholarships	7	4	11	8	13	21	13	16	29
Bursaries	36	44	80	42	72	114	42	74	116
Arts Training Grants	6	8	14	1	5	6	3	4	7
Total	49	56	105	51	90	141	58	94	152

15 ARTICLE 14 - RIGHTS OF RURAL WOMEN

15.1 Singapore is a city-state. The provisions under this article do not apply.

16 ARTICLE 15 - EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN BEFORE THE LAW AND IN CIVIL MATTERS AND IN FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Appointment of the judiciary

16.1 The Constitution specifically provides that persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law.

16.2 The Judges in the High Court and the Court of Appeal are appointed by the President. The judges in the Subordinate Courts are appointed by the Legal Service Commission. In this regard, women have been increasingly appointed to judicial posts as

[35] The National Arts Council (NAC) was set up as a statutory board under MITA in September 1991. President of the Republic of S'pore, Mr Ong Teng Cheong is its Patron-in-Chief. It is a national agency tasked with spearheading the development of the arts and culture in Singapore. Its mission is to help nurture the arts and to develop Singapore into a vibrant Global City for the Arts. Some of NAC's activities include:

a) Organisation of the annual Festival of Arts
b) Coordination of the Arts Housing Scheme for the arts groups
c) Awarding of grants to arts groups and artists
d) Organisation of outreach activities such as Concerts in the Park
e) Arts Education for the schools

compared to the past. Table 9 shows the proportion of women in the judiciary from 1995 to 1997:

TABLE 9 : GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS
1995 to 1997

Type of Courts	1995		1996		1997	
	Total : 66		Total : 91		Total : 89	
Judges :	M	F	M	F	M	F
Supreme Court	17	2	17	2	19	2
Subordinate Courts	34	13	41	31	38	30

Advocacy of the law

16.3 To better inform women and the public on the rights of women, the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, the umbrella body of women's organisations, has published a guide called "Family Law and You". The Guide aims to make the relevant aspects of the law easy to understand. The guide is published in English and is easily available to members of the public. Much effort is channelled into ensuring that women are aware of their rights and that avenues of assistance are made available to them.

16.4 The Law Society of Singapore has produced a series of pamphlets in the 4 official languages containing general information for the community on law-related matters pertaining to:-

a) Divorce;
b) Criminal Legal Aid Scheme;
c) Seeing a lawyer;
d) Giving Evidence;
e) Making a will;
f) Police Investigation And You;
g) Arrest & Bail; and
h) Proceedings in Court.

16.5 The Law Awareness Committee of the Law Society of Singapore and the Temasek Polytechnic launched the "Family Law CD-ROM" on 6 July 1996 at the 2nd Law

Awareness Weekend. The aim of the Family Law CD-ROM is to inform and educate the public on issues, laws and procedures relating to the family.

Right to conclude contracts and administer properties

16.6 Women have the same rights to conclude contracts and administer properties just as men. The capacity of married women to do so is expressly provided for in the Women's Charter[36]. This refers amongst others to the:-

a) capacity in acquisition, holding and disposal of property; and
b) rights and liabilities in any tort, contract, debt or obligation.

16.7 Contracts or private instruments with a legal effect aimed at restricting the legal capacity of women will probably be considered void on grounds of public policy even though no legislation rendering all such contracts and instruments null and void have been enacted.

Legal Aid and Voluntary Legal Counselling Services

16.8 Women are treated equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals in Singapore. There is no differentiation on grounds of gender. The Legal Aid Bureau is a government-run agency that provides legal aid and advice to a person in a civil claim or matter and who cannot afford the service of a lawyer. Legal aid would be granted if:

a) the applicant is a Singapore citizen or permanent resident ;
b) the applicant satisfies the means test; and
c) there are legal merits in the applicant's case.

16.9 The Legal Aid Scheme gives reality to the principle of equal justice as enshrined in Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore. In Financial Year 1997, there were 7,185 applications for legal aid and advice, of which 2,998 were made by male applicants and 4,187 by female applicants.

[36] See Sections 48, 49, 53 & 55 of the Women's Charter.

16.10 Lower income families who often do not know about the law and who cannot afford a lawyer can also avail themselves of the free legal advice provided by the Law Society of Singapore at the 13 Family Service Centres (FSCs). FSCs are one-stop neighbourhood-based social service centres aim at making welfare services more accessible to families in need. Matrimonial issues and family violence are some of the common topics seen by these clinics often attended to by women. The intention is not to make them aware of their rights so that they can proceed with divorce but to provide free legal advice to enable them to make informed decisions affecting their lives. Such services are also made available at about 11 community centres on a monthly basis.

16.11 The Singapore Association of Women Lawyers also provides free legal counselling services at community centres on matrimonial matters, businesses, wills and others. Other voluntary welfare organisations providing free legal counselling include the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, the Touch Legal Care, the Sri Muneeswaran Temple and the Muslim Missionary Society of Singapore.

16.12 Free legal counselling services to the community are also provided by the Legal Clinic at the Family Court at the appointed time. The Legal Clinic is supported by lawyers from the Legal Aid Bureau, the Law Society of Singapore and the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers. This service is meant for persons who would otherwise not have the means to obtain legal services. To qualify, the applicant has to show that his/her monthly salary is less than S$1,050. Where the applicant has many dependants, the application may still be considered though the salary is more than S$1,050.

16.13 The Legal Clinic at the Family Court runs on Wednesday evenings and Friday evenings from 6.00 pm till 8.00 pm. Interpreters are available for applicants who cannot speak English. The service provided is restricted to the giving of legal advice. The lawyers do not represent the applicant in court proceedings.

16.14 The Pro-Bono Legal Assistance Scheme, a pilot project to provide legal assistance for an honorarium to those who do not qualify for Legal Aid and yet are unable to afford the services of private lawyers, was launched on 2 May 1998 by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) of Singapore as a community service. The Scheme is available to

Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents who must be referred by social workers and meet other eligibility criteria such as passing a Means Test.

16.15 Women charged with an offence may apply to the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) run by the Law Society of Singapore, a non-governmental organisation providing legal aid and advice on criminal cases unlike the Legal Aid Bureau. The Scheme is open to all, irrespective of nationality. However, it only covers offences under 13 statutes[37] including the Penal Code and excludes offences that attract the death penalty where the State will assign a lawyer for those who cannot afford one. The CLAS, staffed by volunteer lawyers in private practice, is meant for needy persons who are subject to a Means Test.

Freedom of Movement

16.16 Women have equal rights as men with regard to freedom for moving in and out of Singapore and within Singapore.

17 ARTICLE 16 - FAMILY LAW, MARRIAGE & GUARDIANSHIP OF CHILDREN

Marriage under Civil law

17.1 Solemnisation and registration of marriages are governed by the provisions of the Women's Charter [Cap 353] which was enacted on 15 September 1961. The Charter provides, inter alia, that consent of parents or legal guardian is required if any party or both parties to an intended marriage are under the age of 21 years. However, the Charter also stipulates that a marriage solemnised in Singapore or elsewhere, between persons (of all nationalities) either of whom is under the age of 18 years, shall be void unless the solemnisation of the said marriage was authorised by a special marriage licence granted by the Minister for Community Development under Section 21(2) of the Women's Charter[38].

17.2 In the case of marriage of a child, the Women's Charter provides that minors, (those below 21 years of age), can only be married if the consent of the parent or guardian is

[37] Details of the 13 statutes under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) are in the booklet on "Know the Law", produced by the Law Society of Singapore.

obtained, or in the absence of such consent, the High Court grants a consent order, or the Minister issues a special marriage licence, in the case of those below 18 years of age. The provisions concerned [Sections 9, 13, 21 and 22 of the Women's Charter] and the guidelines for Minister's consideration are intended for the protection of minors in such cases.

17.3 Sections 16 and 17 of the Act stipulate that a marriage should only be solemnised after publication of marriage bans for 21 days and on the authority of a marriage licence issued by the Registrar of Marriages or on a special marriage licence granted by the Minister for Community Development.

17.4 The conditions imposed for the eligibility for marriage are the same for both males and females[39]. The need for free and full consent is provided for by the requirement that the marriage is voidable if either party did not validly consent to it whether in consequence of duress, mistake, unsoundness of mind or otherwise [Section 106 (c)].

17.5 Any person who uses any force or threat to compel a person to marry against his/her will shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding S$3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or to both [Section 36 of the Act). The Women's Charter also provides for persons contravening the solemnisation and registration procedures for marriage to be imprisoned for a term not exceeding 3 years in addition to a fine not exceeding S$5,000 upon conviction of the offence [Section 40].

Marriage under Muslim Law

17.6 Prior to the enactment of the Muslim Ordinance 1958 which was subsequently repealed and replaced by the Administration of Muslim Law Act of 1966, the rules governing Muslim marriage and divorce were administered by government-appointed Kadi (or Registrar of Muslim Marriages). The Kadis were not drawing any salary and their incomes were largely dependent on the marriages and divorces they registered. This was a time when Muslim divorce was rampant because the Kadis did not make many attempts to counsel and help couples to reconcile.

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[38] See Section 9 of the Women's Charter.
[39] See Sections 17(2) (b), 2(c) and 2(e) of the Women's Charter.

17.7 The enactment of the Muslim Ordinance 1958 and subsequently the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) 1996 provides for the setting up of the Registry of Muslim Marriages and the Syariah Court to administer and regulate Muslim issues pertaining to marriage and divorce.

17.8 The enactment of AMLA was a milestone achievement to guarantee Muslim women of their rights in matters of marriage and divorce in Singapore.

17.9 Matters relating to Muslim marriages are regulated by the AMLA, Part VI and the Muslim Marriages and Divorce Rules. The Syariah Court is constituted under Section 35 of the AMLA to adjudicate on disputes where the parties are Muslims and which involve marriage, betrothal, nullity of marriage and divorce. The Act also provides for the setting up of a Counselling Unit by the Syariah Court to help couples with their marital problems.

17.10 Singapore has entered a reservation to this article to safeguard the freedom of practice of personal or religious laws. As mentioned under Article 2, certain provisions in the Islamic Law may contravene the provisions of this article of the Convention or appear to be discriminatory against Muslim women.

17.11 Section 96(4) of the AMLA provides that the minimum age of the bride and groom for their marriage to be solemnised is 16 years. It also provides that the Registrar of Muslim Marriages or Kadi may in special circumstances, solemnise the marriage of a girl who is under the age of 16 years but has attained puberty.

17.12 Rule 8 of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Rules provides that the woman to be wedded is one of the three persons who must make the application for the solemnisation of a marriage (the other two persons are the man and the "wali"; the "wali" is the father or grandfather of the woman to be wedded). Hence, in Singapore it will not be possible for a woman to be wedded without her consent.

17.13 Section 96(2) of the AMLA provides for polygamous marriage which is allowed under Islamic Law. However, the solemnisation of a marriage involving a man who

is already married can only be made by the Kadi (or Registrar of Muslim Marriages) or with the Kadi's written consent and the Kadi has to satisfy himself, after an inquiry, that there is no lawful obstacle to the marriage. Procedures for enquiry to be conducted by the Kadi and matters to be considered by him before he would solemnise or give consent for such a marriage are provided under the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Rules. The Kadi in assessing such an application before him is restricted to ensuring that the reason(s) fall within either one of the following considerations under Rule 11(1) of the Rules, as follows:-

a) whether the husband is competent to support more than one wife and will be able , if he marries more than one wife, to treat them with equity in accordance with the Muslim Law; and
b) whether there is some lawful benefit involved in the marriage and in particular whether the existing wife suffers from sterility, physical unfitness for the conjugal rights or insanity.

17.14 However, it should be noted that it is not the norm for Muslim men to have more than one wife as can be seen from the statistics. In 1995, the number of polygamous marriages granted was 19 out of a total of 4,412 Muslim marriages solemnised (0.43 per cent) and in 1997, the number was 22 out of a total of 4,367 marriages solemnised (0.50 per cent), which is less than 1 per cent of the total number of marriages solemnised. Where the Kadi approved the application of a second marriage for a man, the first wife, if she is not happy, has the right to seek a divorce from the Syariah Court if she chooses to do so.

17.15 The Administration of the Muslim Law Act (AMLA) provides, amongst other things, the protection of Muslim women's rights to own and dispose of their property. Section 119 of the Act provides that all property belonging to a woman upon her marriage, whether movable or immovable and however acquired, shall after marriage to a Muslim husband continue, in the absence of a special written contract to the contrary, to be her own property. She may also dispose of the same by deed or otherwise, with or without the concurrence of her husband.

Dissolution of marriage under Civil law

Family Court

17.16 The Family Court of the Subordinate Courts Civil Division established since March 1995 provides a one-stop place where most family-related disputes can be resolved. It deals with a wide range of family matters including divorce, guardianship, maintenance, probate and adoption, family violence, and other related issues which come under the Women's Charter.

17.17 Mediation and counselling are emphasised as the Family Court experience shows that many cases are settled through mediation without the need for a trial. Such a process also allows for a more amicable and less costly settlement for parties concerned.

Dissolution of marriage under Muslim Law

17.18 Where divorce is inevitable, the AMLA provides for the Syariah Court to adjudicate and to decide on the following:-

a) issue of custody of minor children where as a rule, custody of a child below the age of 7 years will normally be given to the mother because of the emotional bonding and the need to wean the child;
b) the division or disposition of the matrimonial property;
c) the payment of "iddah" (under Section 51(2) of the AMLA) i.e. maintenance of the wife for a 3-month period where both parties are not allowed to be married to another person to allow for the possibility of reconciliation; and
d) the payment of "mutaah" or consolatory gift to the wife upon divorce.

17.19 Under the Islamic Law, a Muslim woman is entitled to a dower and maintenance upon marriage, unlike the husband. The husband is also held legally responsible for maintaining his wife and children and meeting their needs whilst the wife keeps her share of the inheritance and whatever she may earn. She is thus not required to shoulder the economic burden of the family and is not called upon legally to meet any of the

costs of the household expenses or expenses on the children's education and others which she may do so voluntarily. Muslim women can seek maintenance for themselves and their children during the marriage and for the children after divorce under the provisions of the Women's Charter.

17.20 Under Section 52(3) of the AMLA, a woman who has been divorced and who is not or has ceased to be entitled to an order for maintenance under section 51(2) of the Act, may apply to the Court for an order against the husband for payment by him and the sum will be determined by the Court.

17.21 Divorces could be effected in several ways as follows:

a) by "talaq", a word pronounced by the man or uttering other words to the effect to show intention to divorce his wife;
b) by "fasakh" where the Court may grant divorce on grounds which make the marriage void as in marriage not consummated because one party was incapable of consummating it, or the marriage was contracted under duress, or one party became insane or suffered from infectious diseases and etc;
c) by "taklik" where the Court grants the woman a divorce where the man had transgressed the clauses he uttered to the effect that if at anytime during the marriage, the man fails to support his wife for a continuous period of 4 months, or causes her bodily injury, or lose her respect, and if she reports to the Court and if the Court finds the complaint to be true;
d) by "khuluk" or redemption through a sum of payment to be determined by the Court in the case of a divorce by a woman who does not wish to continue with her marriage; However, the sum of payment is to be determined by the Court and it must be within her means to do so.

17.22 Although it would appear that "talaq" can be uttered by a man to divorce his wife and she would be deemed to have been divorced, the right to "talaq" is entrusted to him by his Muslim faith which should be exercised with due care and after all efforts at reconciliation to save the marriage had failed. Muslim couples having marital problems are encouraged under their Muslim faith to appoint arbitrators, one from each side, preferably

an elder from each of the family or community to arbitrate and to assist to reconcile the couples.

17.23 Where all efforts to reconcile the couples fail, including the efforts of the counsellor of the Syariah Court, the "talaq" would then be uttered in Court. In such divorces including those by "taklik", "fasakh" and "Khuluk", Islamic teachings demand that the woman must be treated with honour and dignity under all circumstances.

17.24 It is an offence for a man to divorce his wife without reporting it to the Court within the prescribed period of 7 days from the date the divorce or "talaq" was pronounced by the man. Such men are liable to be sentenced to imprisonment. The Syariah Court also takes the stand that although a man can utter divorce outside the Court, the woman will still be considered his wife until there is official confirmation from the Syariah Court on the matter. As such, the wife is still liable to be maintained by her husband and can seek maintenance for herself if the husband refuses to maintain her.

17.25 Although the figures of Muslim divorces appear to show that most of the divorces are registered under "talaq", it should be noted that in most of these divorces where the women sought divorces under "taklik" and "fasakh" have been subsequently registered instead as under "talaq". This is because during the course of the proceedings, their husbands, to save enquiries into their wives' applications and the acrimony that may be associated with it, would prefer to grant the wife a divorce by "talaq" with the sanction of the Court. This is being encouraged to prevent the adversarial nature of the adjudication.

Rights to retain family name, choose a profession or occupation

17.26 The Women's Charter provides for the right of women to retain the family name and to engage in a chosen profession or occupation[40].

17.27 A woman also has the same rights to dispose of property as her husband.[41] She is treated in the same manner as an unmarried female. This is of course subject to the

[40] See Section 46 of the Women's Charter.
[41] See Sections 51(a) and 52 of the Women's Charter.

law and principles of co-ownership or joint ownership of properties which requires the consent of both parties with regard to any disposal of the property.

Guardianship of children

17.28 On the guardianship of an infant, the Guardianship of Infants Act provides that[42]:-

a) both the mother and the father are given equal rights to apply to the court on any matter affecting the infant;
b) both the mother and father have equal rights of guardianship upon death of either parent;
c) in proceedings before the court concerning the infant, expressly provided that welfare of infant first and paramount consideration[43];
d) either parent is not deemed to have any right superior to that of the other parent save where the welfare of the infant so requires.

17.29 Under the Adoption of Children Act, the conditions under which a person may adopt an infant apply equally to both genders. Before the adoption order is made, the court must be satisfied, among other conditions, that the order will be for the welfare of the infant[44]. Male and female applicants are treated only differently in one situation i. e, where the sole applicant is male and the infant is a female[45]. Such an adoption order will only be made in special circumstances and this is not considered as discriminatory against women.

Housing matters

17.30 There is no discrimination against women for housing matters. Whether a man or woman is married or single (divorced or widowed), he/she will not be discriminated and deprived of housing as long as he/she is able to meet the eligibility criteria of HDB schemes. These criteria will be:-

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[42] See Sections 3 - 7 of the Guardianship of Infants Act, Cap 122.
[43] See Re Sampal Singh [1958] 2 MLJ 283, Loh Koh Eng v Lee Mow Lan [1976] 2 MLJ 88 & Helen Ho Quee Neo v Lim Poi Heng ex

a) that he/she has applied for a flat from HDB;

b) he/she has custody of a child or form a family nucleus; and meet the other eligibility criteria such as age, citizenship.

17.31 The above principle also applies for application of rental flats with HDB.

17.32 For the retention of an existing flat, there is no difference in treatment between men and women. For example in a divorce, one of the parties will be allowed to retain the flat provided the divorce is not due to non-consummation or annulment of marriage. HDB generally accedes to the decisions of the Court unless the Court contradicts any of HDB's policies. If there is any contradiction, the parties have to apply for a Variation of the Court Order. Similar principles are applied for rental flats.

Inheritance of Muslim Estates

17.33 Islamic law on inheritance of a deceased's estate stipulates that a male's share is twice that of a female's share. To illustrate this, a wife is entitled to one quarter of her late husband's estate while a husband is entitled to half of his late wife's estate. A son will get twice the share of the daughter. The father will get twice the share of the mother. Although this rule seems to depict discrimination against women, it should be noted that in Islam, a man is responsible towards the maintenance of his family while a woman is not obliged to maintain the family. Thus what a man gets from his inheritance does not really belong to him solely since he is required to support the women under his responsibility including his wife, unmarried sisters, daughters, widowed mothers and grandmothers. On the other hand, what a woman gets from her inheritance is solely for her own use without any obligation to give it to other members of her family.

18 ARTICLES 17 TO 23 - RULES AND PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE CEDAW AND THE OBLIGATIONS BY STATE PARTIES UNDER THE CEDAW

18.1 These sections of the CEDAW apply mainly to the work of the UN Committee on the CEDAW and no comments are made on these articles.

19 ARTICLE 24 - MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE CEDAW

19.1 The Attorney-General's Chambers engages in a regular review and reform of the law. Several committees have been established and tasked with the responsibility of reviewing and proposing reform. Two of the committees are:-

a) the Criminal Procedure Code Review Committee; and

b) the Penal Code Review Committee.

19.2 The 2 committees are studying existing laws with the view to propose reforms in areas in response to changing societal needs and realities and to respond to our international obligations.

19.3 The International Affairs Division of the Attorney-General Chambers whose duties include studying the possibilities and implications of acceding to international conventions, would in the course of their work be mindful of the need to amend the domestic legislation where necessary and make the appropriate recommendations. This will involve consultation and liaison with the relevant Ministries concerned.

19.4 Recent legislative reforms in the 2 areas that are of significance to this Report are as follows:-

Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code

a) New 364A (enacted with effect from 2 January 1996) allows for evidence to be given through live-video or live-television link in proceedings involving witnesses below the age of 16 years for certain criminal offences. The rationale being that vulnerable witnesses such as ravaged women and children are protected from confrontation with their assailants in court and thereby lessens the trauma of testifying against the perpetrator(s) of the offences committed[46]. This was utilised for the first time in April 1996 in the

case of PP v Norli bin Jasmani Criminal Case No. 17 of 1996 involving the alleged rape of a minor by her uncle. The complainant gave evidence through the live video link in the Technology Court.

Amendments to Women's Charter Bill (enacted with effect from 1 May 1997

b) New Section 64 provides a wider coverage of protection to victims of domestic violence and also expands definition of family violence.

c) New Section 65 provides power to the Court to issue a Personal Protection Order (PPO) on the principle of "balance of probability" rather than "beyond reasonable doubt" that "family violence" has occurred or is likely to occur.

d) New Section 65 (5) gives the court powers to attach additional conditions to the protection orders e.g. mediation, counselling, grant of exclusive right of occupation to protected person of shared residence.

e) Greater penalties are provided for breach of a protection order which is deemed to be a seizable offence within the meaning of the Criminal Procedure Code.

f) New Sections 66 and 67 provide for the granting of expedited orders under certain conditions.

g) New Section 112 provides for a more equitable basis for the division of matrimonial assets upon dissolution of marriage by taking into account all the circumstances of the case. This abolished the dichotomy between the acquisition of assets on a joint as opposed to a sole effort basis which is artificial, impractical and fails to take into account the contributions of the non-working spouse [often the female], which existed under the previous provisions.

Domestic Violence Against Women

19.5 The Singapore government does not tolerate domestic violence. Violence against women is a priority concern identified by the ASEAN Sub-committee on Women (formerly the ASEAN Women's Programme) of which Singapore is a member. An area of increasing concern is that of domestic violence. The Amendment Bill to widen the definition of family violence to enhance the protection available to such victims was passed by Parliament on 27 August 1996. The Bill was passed after much debate and consideration by a 10-member Select Committee appointed by government to study the amendments which would have impact on many and were of concern to the public. The review and amendments of the Women's Charter aim to protect women and to provide more succour to troubled relationships rather than to make it more gender neutral.

19.6 All cases of domestic violence where hurt is caused or threats are uttered are punishable in the like manner as if committed in a non-domestic context[47]. However, in practice, victims are often reluctant to lodge complaints. The number of such cases seeking medical assistance at the public sector hospitals were 446, 504 and 617 for the years 1995, 1996 and 1997 as compared to the smaller number of reported cases of spousal violence lodged with the police - 28 in 1995, 33 in 1996 and 25 in 1997. Of these reported cases, the number of convicted cases for offences of spousal violence was 10 in 1995, 6 in 1996 and 10 in 1997. The sentences ranged from 2 months to 2 years imprisonment and 3 strokes of the cane.

19.7 Arising from the 1994 Committee of Supply Debate, the Ministry of Home Affairs formed an Inter-Ministry Work Group on Spousal Violence from 11 April 1994 to 5 June 1996 to recommend immediate and long-term measures for the better management of spousal violence cases in the particular the ground co-ordination between the relevant agencies.

19.8 The recommendations of the Inter-Ministry Work Group on Spousal Violence have since either been implemented or are in the pipeline. The Ministry of Community Development introduced a networking system on family violence which was

set up island-wide on 1st July 1996. The objective of the Family Violence Networking System is to inform victims of family violence of the resources available to them when they lodge police reports at the police stations. This network involves the Ministry of Community Development, the police, social service agencies, crisis shelters, hospitals and clinics.

19.9 The Family Court has instituted a medical referral service with 8 hospitals to obtain medical examination forms and reports expeditiously. Applicants need to pay for the medical examination. Those who do not have the means to pay, may approach the medical social workers of the hospitals. The hospitals may waive the charges where appropriate.

Public Education on the Amendments to the Women's Charter

19.10 A workshop for social service agencies on the amendments of the Women's Charter and its provisions was conducted by the Ministry of Community Development (MCD) in April 1997 in preparation for the amendments that came into force on 1 May 1997.

19.11 A public forum was jointly organised by the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, the umbrella body for women organisations in Singapore, with support from the Ministry of Community Development (MCD) on 10 May 97 to promote public awareness of the amendments to the Women's Charter.

19.12 The figures appended below show that the recent amendments of the Women's Charter on family violence have been effective in addressing to some extent, the issue of violence against women. The number of applications for Personal Protection Orders (PPOs) increased 20.3 per cent for the period May to December 1997 (1571 cases) as compared to the year 1996 (1306 cases). The number of PPOs issued also increased 9.5 per cent from the period May to December 1997 (1168 cases) as compared to the year 1996 (1067 cases).

Supportive Services

19.13 To meet this new area of work on domestic violence, social workers and the police need to be equipped with the skills and special knowledge. The Ministry of Community Development (MCD) organises workshops and courses on Family Violence with the help of training agencies like the Family Resources & Training Centre (FRTC) and the Counselling & Care Centre for social workers. MCD and the Police also co-ordinate small-group workshops for police officers and social workers at divisional level to enhance the collaboration between the social service agencies and the police.

19.14 MCD fully funds some of the training programmes for social workers from the public and the voluntary sectors. One such course is a 2-year diploma course on family and marital counselling. MCD also commissioned many agencies to conduct training programmes for social workers working with perpetrators. MCD also sponsored 4 social workers on a trip to study family violence management in Australia. The police in collaboration with the Society Against Family Violence (SAFV) have been actively training its front-line officers in the area of family violence.

19.15 The Police Training Command has incorporated the management of Spousal Violence into the training syllabus for the trainees. Besides the training of recruits, family violence workshops were also held for front-line officers.

19.16 Public education is an important component to deal with family violence. MCD works closely with the voluntary organisations like Association of Women for Action and Research, the Singapore Council of Women Organisations and the Society Against Family Violence, in this area to promote the awareness of family violence. An information booklet and other public education materials on family violence were developed in 1997 and were disseminated to hospitals, community centres, lawyers and others for their information and reference should they come into contact with such cases.

19.17 An inter-ministry agency has been set up by the Ministry of Community Development to develop a centralised data base on family violence that can be assessed by the Ministry of Community Development, the Police and the hospitals to facilitate the

20 ARTICLES 25 TO 28 AND ARTICLE 30 RELATING TO ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE CONVENTION

20.1 These sections of the CEDAW refer mainly to the administrative procedures for and upon accession or ratification of the CEDAW and no comments are made on them.

21 ARTICLE 29 - ARBITRATION

21.1 Singapore has entered a reservation to Article 29 (1) as is expressly permitted by Article 29 (2) of the Convention.

22 CONCLUDING REMARKS

22.1 The Government of Singapore is committed to the advancement of women and the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women. This commitment is reinforced with the signing and endorsement of various declarations on women adopted at regional and international meetings. The Declarations include the Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action adopted at the 4th UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995.

22.2 The Government's aims are to provide an enabling environment for women to achieve their potential in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the society, based on a principle of meritocracy. The Government has and will continue to work in close collaboration with the non-governmental organisations including women's groups, to promote the welfare and status of women in Singapore.

22.3 Over the last few years, an even greater emphasis has been given to public education. The significant milestones were the launching of the Singapore Family Values and its Promotion Fund of S$1 million by government in 1994 and the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-Ministry Committee on the Dysfunctional Families, Juvenile Delinquency and Drug Abuse made in 1995. Examples of these that support women are:-

a) more focus on marriage preparation, marriage enrichment, parenting, family life and values through workshops, media campaigns, talks at work places and participation in exhibitions/trade fairs; and
b) the promotion of Student Care Centre Programmes where government funding to the Voluntary Welfare Organisations and subsidies are provided to help low-income families since December 1996.

22.4 With increased participation in the labour force, better education and rising aspirations, the traditional gender roles of women in Singapore have begun to change. These changes develop naturally and we need to manage and support the transition. The government will continue to support and review, if necessary, the various infrastructure to assist and support this transition of women's roles in a modern society.

Annex

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATING TO WOMEN AND FAMILY WHICH SINGAPORE IS A PARTY TO

Singapore is a party to eight International Agreements or Conventions related to the Status of Women and 16 International Agreements and Conventions on Workers with Family Responsibilities.

I INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS/CONVENTIONS RELATED TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN

International agreements/conventions on the status of women to which Singapore is a party are as follows:

(1) Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (20 Feb 1957). Singapore became a party by succession on 18 March 1996.

(2) Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (21 March 1950). Singapore became a party by succession on 26 October 1966.

(3) International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, signed at Paris on 4 May 1910 and amended by the Protocol signed at Lake Success, New York, 4 May 1944. Singapore became a party by succession on 7 Jun 94.

(4) Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region, Bangkok, 5 July 1988,signed by Minister for Foreign Affairs.

(5) The Jakarta Declaration on Women in Development in Asia and the Pacific,signed by Minister of State for Health and Education in Jakarta on 14 June 1994,in relation to the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development.

(6) The Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, September 1995.

(7) The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), signed by Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs on 2 October 1995.

(8) The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), signed by Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs on 3 October 1995.

II INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS/CONVENTIONS ON WORKERS WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

International agreements/conventions on workers with family responsibilities of which Singapore is a party are as follows:

(1) Minimum Age (Industry) Convention, 1919

(2) Minimum Age (Sea) Convention, 1920

(3) Unemployment Indemnity (Shipwreck) Convention, 1920

(4) Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention

(5) Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921

(6) Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention, 1921

(7) Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921

(8) Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention,

(9) Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention, 1926

(10) Forced Labour Convention, 1930

(11) Protection Against Accidents (Dockers) Convention (Revised), 1932

(12) Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935

(13) Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention, 1936

(14) Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939

(15) Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939

(16) Labour Inspection Convention, 1947